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THE EDUCATIONAL THEORY OF
PLUTARCH

FOR REVIEW

THE EDUCATIONAL THEORY OF PLUTARCH

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οὔτοι καὶ κοινῇ ξυνελθόντες ἀπαρχὴν τῆς σοφίας
ἀνέθεσαν τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι εἰς τὸν νεῶν τὸν ἐν
Δελφοῖς, γράψαντες ταῦτα, ἃ δὴ πάντες ὑμνοῦσιν,
γνῶθι σαντόν καὶ μηδὲν ἄγαν.

PLATO, *Protagoras*, 343 B.

ὄρα δὲ καὶ ταυτὶ τὰ προγράμματα, τό 'γνῶθι
σαντόν' καὶ τό 'μηδὲν ἄγαν.' ὅσας ζητήσεις κεκίνηκε
φιλοσόφους καὶ ὅσον λόγων πλῆθος ἅφ' ἐκάστου
καθάπερ ἀπὸ σπέρματος ἀναπέφυκεν.

PLUTARCH, *De E apud Delphos*, 385 D.

P R E F A C E

THE popularity of Plutarch as the author of the *Parallel Lives* has never really waned. It is thus surprising that the other half of his extant work, the essays generally called by the collective title of the *Moralia*, should for long periods together be almost unread and unremembered. I have found in these essays an interest even greater than I had been led to expect from my love of the "Lives." In the *Moralia* Plutarch, the philosopher, the priest, the citizen, the father, reveals himself with an intimacy rare among the ancient Greeks. Above all, we see him as a teacher, the possessor, as we are, of an inheritance of imperishable thought, pledged to a certain environment which is portrayed vividly in his pages, one who, in his lifelong devotion to his calling, is second to few of the teachers of old time, second perhaps only to his chosen master, Plato. The reflection in the *Moralia* seems wonderfully alive, and in some ways might almost be a portrait of to-day. Plutarch's teaching never fails to be suggestive, even when in some of its details it seems to clash with modern conditions and requirements.

To several distinguished lovers of Plutarch I have to express cordial thanks for the invaluable assistance they gave me in the course of my work. Professor

J. S. Reid, of Cambridge, has read most of the book in MS., and to his interest in later Greek philosophy, and his intimate knowledge of the historical background to the age of Plutarch, I am especially indebted.

The late Professor Henry Jackson also gave most kind help, although he had already more calls on his time and interest than his failing strength could well bear. I consulted him about the chapters dealing with Plutarch's debt to Platonic philosophy, and he offered suggestions with that vigour and generosity for which he is always remembered.

It is just over a century since probably the greatest work on the text of the *Moralia* was completed by Wyttenbach, Professor of Latin in the University of Leyden. The tradition survives there still, for Wyttenbach's chair was, until a year ago, held by Professor J. J. Hartman, whose exhaustive volume, *De Plutarcho scriptore et philosopho*, first drew my attention to Dutch work in this subject. Since then my debt to Dutch scholarship has grown continually. Professor Hartman read the first part of my book in MS., and his criticism illuminated not only my study of Plutarch but my whole view of Greek literature. I have received the greatest kindness from him and Mrs. Hartman, and from many of his colleagues whom I met in Holland; and I realise now, as never before, the friendship which for centuries has bound British and Dutch scholars.

I also thank Dr. J. W. Mackail for his most helpful criticism of several chapters which he kindly read before the book was sent to the press.

This book was written during my tenure of the Marion Kennedy Studentship at Newnham College,

PREFACE

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Cambridge. It is but an inadequate recognition of all that my College has done for me, but it is with the greatest gratitude and pride that I inscribe the name upon the title-page.

My thanks are due to the Senate of the University of London for a grant, from their Publication Fund, towards the cost of the production of this work.

K. M. W.

ROYAL HOLLOWAY COLLEGE.

March, 1922.

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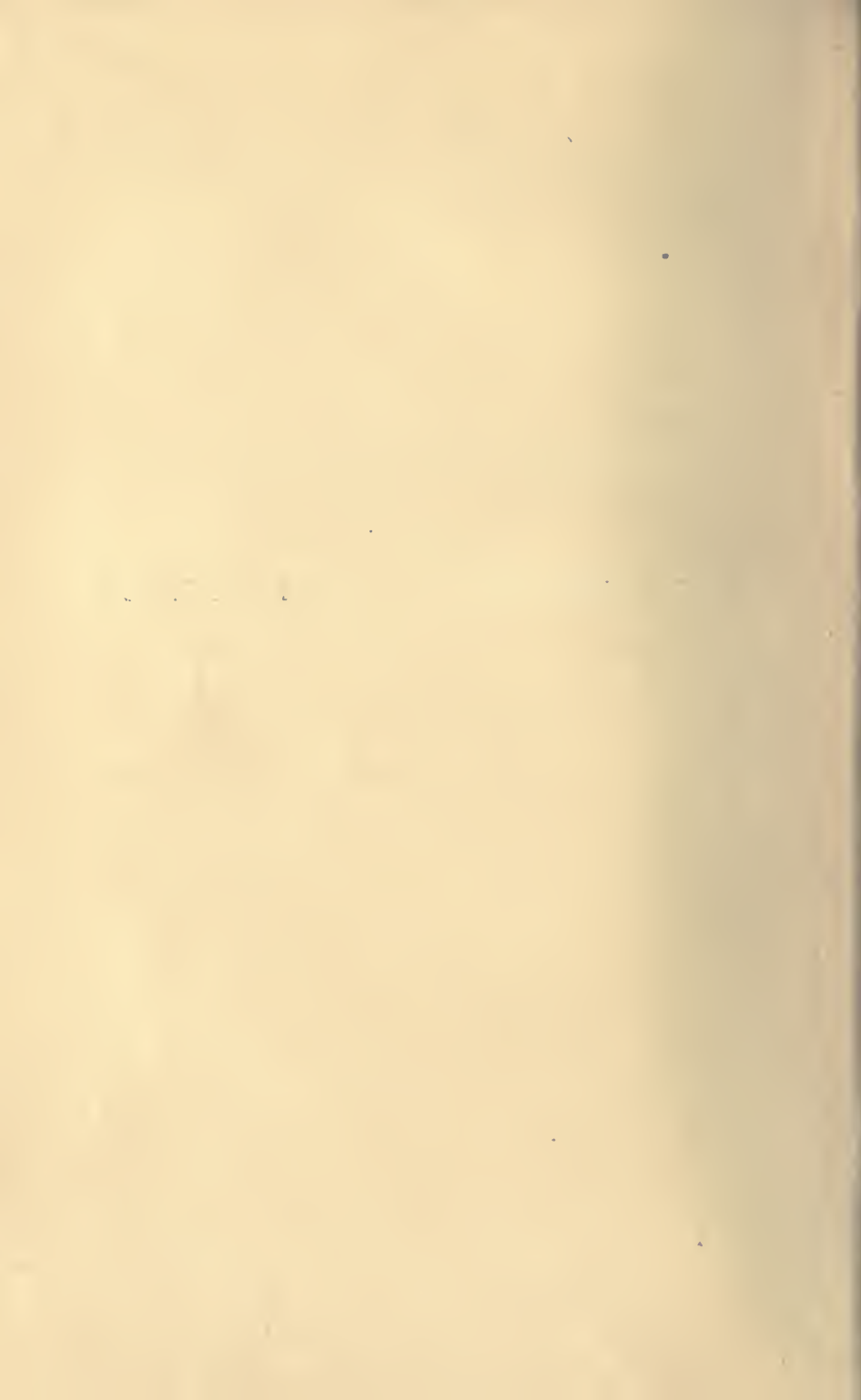
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PART I

THE EDUCATIONAL SCHEME OF PLUTARCH



CHAPTER I

THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE TIME OF PLUTARCH

PLUTARCH is one of the most prolific writers whose works have come down to us from antiquity. In perusing the vast mass of his writings, which (apart from his famous *Parallel Lives*) deal with religion, metaphysics, ethics, politics, natural science, history, literature—indeed, with the most varied interests, both practical and academic—not all of his few readers realise the definite motive underlying them. These works are not to be compared with the impersonal store of information contained in an encyclopædia. They are a deliberate gift to some recipient whom we have to discover and define. Plutarch is, before all things, a teacher. In the whole world there is hardly a relationship between one man and another which admits of such generous and single-hearted giving. The fact that those to whom Plutarch gave directly and so freely have long ago become nameless and unremembered, does not diminish the value of what he gave ; so we will take their places for a little, and examine this old and half-forgotten gift.

When a man builds a house, he considers not only the materials, the wood and stone, at his disposal, and the architectural effect he will achieve with these. He considers the need for his house at a particular time and in a particular place, its adaptation to a certain climate, and its suitability for its proposed

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inhabitants. Afterwards, when critics come to judge the completed edifice, they will have to bear all these circumstances in mind before they deliver their verdict.

This principle applies here. We must first consider Plutarch's relationship to the world around him—the where, the when, the why, of his teaching—before we venture to judge his methods or results. A teacher, as much as a pupil, is the product of his environment. He is made as well as born.

The greatness of an educator lies, to a large extent, in his sensitiveness to the temperament and needs of the society in which he lives. He must study the world around him, and then formulate his theories to suit its requirements. Plato looked to the simplicity and restraint of the Spartan system of education, at a time when, in most parts of Greece, old canons of order in life and thought were being overthrown. Comenius, persecuted and homeless through the Thirty Years' War, laboured strenuously to prepare youth by a better education for a more tranquil and prosperous future. Rousseau, arguing from the corruption of Parisian life to the viciousness of civilisation in general, framed his revolutionary educational theories accordingly.

What was the background which imposed its special form and colour on Plutarch's teaching ?

If we were to accept the testimony of Juvenal and some of his contemporaries, we should expect the first century of the Roman Empire to have produced something like a Rousseau. But that, within the limits of politics, the *infesta virtutibus tempora* arraigned by the Satirists and by Tacitus, left Plutarch's own life unhurt, and his outlook clear and serene, is beyond

doubt. Himself a Greek, and a member of an old and distinguished family, he wrote of the Roman rule in terms of unmeasured praise.¹ From the point of view of a provincial he was probably right. We have sufficient evidence that Roman imperialism worked for the good of the Roman provinces. This good was often a dull, uninspiring condition, but it was sound enough to refute the pessimism of Tacitus and the sweeping generalisations of Juvenal. Augustus laid the foundations of provincial administration deep and true enough to survive the mad and extravagant policies of some of his successors. In Greece itself the following century was one of uninterrupted prosperity. From the reign of Claudius it is perhaps possible to trace the beginning of the fusion of Greek and Roman life which culminated in the removal of the seat of government from Rome to Byzantium. Then Nero's declaration of the freedom of the Greeks at the Isthmian Games of 67, though meaningless enough, was at least an apparent social uplift. The removal of this so-called freedom by Vespasian, with a view to sound practical administration, caused a certain amount of discontent, though the more reasonable thinkers recognised its advantage. The Imperial favour towards Greece was continued by Domitian and Trajan, and came to a head in the lavish generosity of Hadrian.

At this time, in fact, Greece wears an air not only of prosperity and calm but of complacency. Incessant petty municipal activity, possible at last after years of distraction, formed and satisfied the aims of its people. All the stones in the country were barely numerous enough to hold the laudatory inscriptions in which

¹ *De fort. Rom.*, ch. ii.

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citizens were formally thanked for public benefactions or excellent morality or amiable manners. The year hardly contained enough days to include all the religious festivals, both old and new, which gave men opportunity for worshipping the Emperor, flattering their wealthy neighbours, and congratulating themselves on their own good fortune. In this atmosphere of placid content Plutarch seems to a large extent to have shared, though his eyes were opened by travel, especially by his visits to Rome, to certain flaws in his native society which he tried to rectify. His general tone, however, indicates satisfaction. He is hardly to be blamed for lacking the "divine discontent" which is sometimes said to distinguish the master-mind, but it is important to note that, in common with his fellow-countrymen, he did lack it.

The things which, if we are to believe Tacitus, Juvenal, Seneca, and Martial, he must have seen in his visits to Rome, seem to have left him unmoved in a way which is a curious comment on the writings of those authors. According to them, life in the capital possessed certain features which were hardly realised in the provinces. At Rome, the Imperial system, lacking as yet the stabilising influence of tradition and the wisdom of experience, was tending towards a state of moral anarchy. Organised espionage, confiscation, and murder attended the mad profusion of the Cæsars. Slavery was casting a stigma upon all labour, and the free poor were becoming more and more impoverished. The populace was passionately addicted to the most brutalising amusements. The whole system spelt political, economic, and moral depravity to the Empire, while the widespread luxury, and the general Bohemianism first set in fashion by Nero,

were likely to fill the average visitor from the provinces with astonishment and dismay.

It can hardly be denied that these evils existed. Although towards the close of the century matters mended somewhat, the dawn of the *rara temporum felicitas* of the second century cannot have been unshadowed by what had gone before. But we must read Pliny as well as Tacitus, the second as well as the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans ; we must remember, too, that Plutarch was not an unintelligent person. The Roman world was larger than the pessimists supposed. It contained regions which they had not explored, in which were found the pleasant minds of the elder and the younger Pliny and of Quintilian, the better side of Martial, and the charms of many strangers, such as Plutarch. Perhaps even these men, in spite of their absorbing interest in literature, and their detachment from the more distasteful features of contemporary life, could not escape the *tædium vitæ* which stifled the city itself. But travelling in those days was easy and luxurious, and on the Campanian and Laurentine shores, or, farther afield, by the valley of the Po or on the edge of Como, men could find a life of peace and amusement and prosperity. It is not difficult to imagine the general tenour of Plutarch's stay in Italy, for we know that he travelled at least as far north as the field of Bedriacum. He was the kind of man to whom shocks were repugnant, and he would gravitate at once towards the sphere of life most congenial to him. Both as a philosophic historian and as a Greek magistrate he gave a general acceptance to the domination of the Roman Empire, but the more unpleasant side of the system gave him no concern.

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Under the Empire, most of the avenues to political life were closed. Not only were domestic politics uninviting, but there was no independent rival state side by side with Rome to call its public spirit into activity by competition or any other of our modern forms of political interaction. The natural result was that the attention of men was diverted from action to thought. Philosophic speculation was more important in this period than was political action, and here Plutarch found more of general interest and individual profit. Many years before, Augustus had seen that it was impossible to restore the old Roman national character unless he set up anew the old religion and worship. He rebuilt the old shrines, and reorganised the ancient priestly foundations and ceremonies which had fallen upon evil days. The so-called worship of himself was an innovation neither so drastic nor so scandalous as it has sometimes been painted. It was little more than a worship of power,¹ and there was practically nothing personal in the matter. It was not new for the Roman state religion to have a political motive. Indeed, it never contained much inspiration of moral enthusiasm apart from politics. But it had nothing in common with the thinking element in Roman society. It will be remembered how Seneca objected to sacrifices, and how Cicero, a high officer of the State religion, denounced the use of images, and wondered how two haruspices could ever meet without a smile. By the last years of the Republic, Roman religion was little more than a superstition, and during the first century of the Empire the gulf between the restored superstition and the real views of thinking men widened so enormously that, in considering the

¹ The Greeks derived Roma from *ῥώμη*.

mature thought of the latter period, we find ourselves viewing nothing else than a broad, if unsystematised, philosophy.

The thoughtful Roman felt the need of some foundation for life, something sure and immovable, to which he could cling amid the vicissitudes of the external world. This he found to a large extent in Stoicism. The Stoic had two havens of refuge—the universe and his own soul; these, at least, were unassailable by informer or Emperor.

If it is character which determines opinion, rather than opinion which moulds character, Rome was the natural home of Stoicism. Epicureanism, which was more congenial to the refined and artistic Greek temperament, contributed a little to Roman thought. But it was iconoclastic, antipatriotic, negative in its working. The positive, constructive elements in Roman philosophic teaching, especially on the ethical side, came from Stoicism. Besides its value as a moral agent, it was responsible for much of the public spirit (limited as this was) in Rome at the time. It also formed the permanent basis for Roman jurisprudence. The influence of Stoicism was wide as well as deep. But the great point about it was that it met a practical need. It aimed at the practical assistance of individuals. Conduct was life, and the leading moral stimulus was individual self-respect.

Of the two most prominent Stoics of the century, Seneca was not always consistent in his theories, but his ideals and self-discipline, preserved in spite of the society in which he lived, are a triumph of the philosophy he followed. Epictetus, lame, poor, and unfortunate, was forced by the circumstances of his life to lay greater stress on the virtues of fortitude and endurance,

and in his obscurity he was a better apostle of the majesty of man than was the minister in Cæsar's palaces.

Nevertheless, every Stoic of the age was important in his own way for the practical services which he rendered mankind. Each illustrates the fact, which cannot be over-emphasised, that philosophy at this time had become ethical to the exclusion of other interests. Yet Stoicism as a system did not grip the world. It was too heroic for the ordinary man. It demanded rather than gave courage. Something more was needed.

It seemed at one time as if Greece would be able to supply what was wanted. Greek influence at Rome increased steadily through the first century of the Empire, and the comparative gentleness of Greek character, and the cosmopolitanism of the Greek outlook, were not without their influence on the Roman mind. The Greeks, like the Romans, were confronted with the problem of how to bring their old religion into line with new ways of thought. They, too, were unable to find satisfaction in contemporary Epicureanism and Stoicism. Turning to the wisdom of their ancients, they found that Aristotle helped them but little, chiefly owing to the immense difficulty of his writings. So they looked to Plato, who promised much for the re-quickening of the thought of the age. Thus there arose a new, or, rather, modernised, system of Platonism. It touched a little on Aristotelian metaphysics and Stoic ethics, and eventually rested mainly on the most visionary speculations of Plato. It is highly important in itself as an expression of the Greek thought of the period, and it is also valuable on the side of its affinity with the philosophies of the East. It

found much congenial in the incoming Asiatic and Egyptian beliefs, to which many Romans as well as many Greeks looked eagerly, but in vain, for the consolation they wanted.

Zeno and Isis, Plato and Serapis, all had their message. But the tale of witnesses is not yet told.

The appearance of Christianity in the world did not entail the shock of novelty which people have sometimes supposed. Many features of the new experience were common to other religions. It included the Stoic doctrine of universal brotherhood, the Greek innate amiability of demeanour, and the Egyptian spirit of religious reverence. But essentially it was new—an unphilosophised belief which resisted the efforts of many later thinkers to shape it into a philosophy. Rome found it surprising because it was so unpolitical; Greece, because it was so unacademic. In truth, it was intensely personal, and that was why it attained a universality of influence which no philosophy had ever approached. Its reception was admittedly varied and sporadic. Yet it is most extraordinary that Plutarch never so much as mentions it, for at times only a few miles separated him from St. Paul. Plutarch must have met Christianity, if not in Italy, certainly in Greece. The Greeks' insistence on its cosmopolitanism, and the Romans' complacent, rather judicial attitude towards it, can hardly have been unobserved by one whose interest otherwise ranged over the thought of his age in a particularly exhaustive way.

To sum up. Greece had always a natural tendency to Epicureanism, just as Rome at once found Stoicism congenial to its national character. When Greek and Roman came into close contact in the first century of

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the Empire, Stoicism, which had gained in influence with the growing political domination of Rome, was modified into something a little gentler and more humane. But neither system was found to be adequate to the needs of the time. The revival of Platonism was vigorous and hopeful within a limited sphere. The way for it was prepared partly by the increasing influence of Oriental mysticism. Meanwhile, Christianity brought fresh forces into play. But development was slow, and it was long before a satisfying solution to the universal problem was produced by any. Faith and doubt, irritation and fatalism, tore at the thought of the age. Retrospect to Plato and Zeno is not enough. We must look ahead, and bear in mind the heart-searchings of Marcus Aurelius, the mistrust of Celsus, the ridicule of Lucian, before we judge Plutarch's place in such a bewildering world of thought.

CHAPTER II

GREEK AND ROMAN EDUCATION DOWN TO THE TIME OF PLUTARCH

PLUTARCH's solution of the problem described in the last chapter is presented in a most practical form, namely, in his theory of education. So nearly did he satisfy himself on the subject that he ventured to offer his conclusions in a manner which might assist the younger generation. These, perhaps, hardly constitute anything so definite as a system, for they are found scattered widely among his writings. Yet his main motives were, undoubtedly, clear in his own mind, and it is possible, without doing injustice to the charming diffuseness of the material, to collect and arrange the thoughts, which he himself never systematised on paper. In order, however, that they may be properly understood, it is necessary to look back and to review briefly the precedents which Plutarch had for his theory. We must see what lines earlier Greek education had followed, and how far it had been influenced by its contact with Rome.

The schools of Greece fall into two groups, which have much in common as regards aims, but which differ considerably in methods. The fundamental differences between them are the outcome of the racial distinctions between the Dorians and Ionians.

The Dorian system appears in its most typical form at Sparta. Here education was unanimously considered

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to be of supreme importance. It was regulated and enforced by the State, and was exactly the same for all citizens. Except that the girls lived mainly at home, while the boys were removed from their parents, and were brought up in what might almost be termed great boarding schools, education was alike for both sexes. It was almost entirely physical. The greater part of the day was spent in gymnastics and in other forms of physical exercise. Fighting was encouraged by authority. Riding and swimming were also taught, the latter in the drastic manner adopted by our old Navy. "Dancing" was very popular, though ancient dancing was often akin to the drill rather than to the dancing of modern times. The hardships of the whole training were excessive, and often brutalising. So much attention was given to the development of the body, that no time was left for any considerable training of the mind. The objects of Spartan education did not include intellectual acuteness; they were mainly discipline, endurance, and military efficiency. Whatever the value of this ideal, for many generations the Spartans attained it to a remarkable degree. Their influence as educators was clearly important, for to Sparta, earlier than to any other Greek city, foreign boys came to receive their schooling; while their attraction for the visionary speculators of later ages was exceedingly strong.

At Athens, the chief home of Ionian culture, the educational system was very different. Gymnastics were naturally not neglected, for all Greeks attached great importance to physical training, partly in consequence of their appreciation of bodily beauty, and partly because at any moment they might be called upon to take the field in defence of their cities. But at

Athens the development of the mind was held to be of no less importance.

The only schooling which the State rendered compulsory was two years' military training of the *ἐφηβοί*, youths between eighteen and twenty ; but the citizens were so alive to the importance of general education, that they developed for their boys (though not for their girls, who lived all their lives in seclusion) an educational system independent of any support from the State, and extending from the earliest years to the time of military service.

The ordinary primary education was received at the hands of three specialists. The *grammatistes* gave instruction in reading, writing, poetry, and arithmetic ; the *citharistes* taught the child to play the lyre and to sing the works of the lyric poets ; the *pædotribes* superintended his physical development. This training lasted till the age of fourteen, and practically all citizens availed themselves of it. Secondary education, which occupied the next four years, was naturally the province mainly of the rich. It fell into two divisions. In the first place, there was the training of the sophists, the professional teachers, who wandered over the Greek world, carrying their knowledge from city to city. Protagoras, Prodicus, and Hippias are examples. They were all men of great personal charm, and with a gift for evoking immense ambition and enthusiasm among their pupils, who tried feverishly to become masters of mathematics, grammar, etymology, geography, history, natural history, politics, ethics, music, drawing, painting, and above all, rhetoric, before such prodigies of learning flitted on to the next city. They imparted a form of "intensive culture," such as is met with to-day in the travelling Chautauquas of America.

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✓ From the beginning of the fourth century there was also the continuous teaching of the more stationary schools of Plato, who taught mainly logic and philosophy, and of Isocrates, who taught mainly rhetoric. The school of Isocrates was intended to be a preparation for practical life. It was a school of good style and sound thinking, and took upon itself responsibility for morals and general culture. By means of the stress which it laid on rhetoric, it prompted interest in politics and taught men to realise their responsibilities as members of a community. The philosophic schools, on the other hand, led their pupils towards a life of retirement and contemplation, and away from political and social activity. Both schools found their ideal in the essentially Greek quality of *καλοκάγαθία*. Both, too, recognised and tried to combat the great fault of the sophists' teaching—its haste and superficiality—which gave no time for the pupil's personal endeavour.

Tertiary education consisted originally of two years' military training imposed by the State. A large part of the first year was devoted to severe physical exercise in the gymnasia. The second was filled with the duty of patrolling the country and frontiers and garrisoning the forts. After many years innovations came into force and changed the character of the system. Philosophy and literature became incorporated as subjects of study. As the number of Athenian citizens dwindled, foreigners began to be enrolled. The old military service was gradually merged in the well-established philosophical and rhetorical schools, whose character was already being weakened by internal strife and mutual competition. The result was the development of the Athenian University. This, even before Imperial times, was held in worldwide esteem, and was the

resort of many Roman and other foreign students, who not only received but gave much in the way of intellectual stimulus and widened interests.

There are several points to be noticed concerning Greek education in general. At the back of it was always the Greek conception of the whole duty of man. This varied a little, but never beyond recognition. The Spartan was required to be efficient, brave, and indifferent to hardships and pain. The Athenian's ideal was much wider. It included not only perfection of body but great mental activity and the cultivation of good taste.¹ But the training of character was the vital motive of both systems, and both, alike in theory and in practice, aimed at producing "the best possible citizen, not the best possible money-maker."² Technical and utilitarian subjects were thus wholly excluded from the Greek curriculum. This would hardly have been possible had education been devised to meet the needs of the whole population; only the existence of slavery permitted the existence of such an aristocracy of culture.

Its main object, then, was ethics, and it based its ethics in some way on happiness; but the happiness to be sought was not so much that of the individual as that of the community. The absence of home influences from the environment of the growing boy contributed much to the success of this ideal. The personal loss to the boy is obvious, but that the State gained, since its citizens were so perpetually impressed with the necessity of self-sacrifice to the welfare of the community, cannot be denied.

¹ Perhaps the best contemporary expression of this ideal is the funeral speech of Pericles.

² K. Freeman, *Schools of Hellas*, p. 275.

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Intellectually the Greeks were endowed more richly than most nations ; and all of them, from the greatest to the least, contributed spontaneously and generously to the work of education. From time to time the best teachers among them wrote down their ideals and theories and methods, and committed to posterity books of educational criticism. These were sometimes constructive, sometimes destructive. Often the value of the detail was purely local or temporal, but the spirit which informed the whole is lasting in vitality and value. Of these writers, Plato is the most important for our study, on account of his influence on Plutarch.

Various aspects of Plato's educational theory will be considered later in detail, side by side with the corresponding views of Plutarch. It is important that his general outlook should be properly understood. He regarded education as a nurture, *τροφή*. To him the human soul was something living, something very sensitive, and delicate, which could be fed or starved, brought to good or evil, at the will of those in charge of its development. He felt that the individual perpetually assimilated all that he saw and heard around him ; and thus he laid great stress on the importance of environment at all ages. In the *Republic* his philosophers were subjected to a formal education up to the age of thirty-five, but in general terms he held education to be a lifelong process, inevitable from the cradle to the grave.

In devising a system of education for the citizens of his ideal State, he held that each member of a society should have his proper place in the organisation of the society's work, and should be fitted by education to do his own work as well as possible. The three principal works in the State were—first, the production

of the necessary material commodities ; secondly, the protection of the State against external enemies ; and thirdly, legislation and government. Of these, said Plato, only the second and third call for education. The character of this education is to be entirely non-technical. It is to predispose the soul, intellectually and morally, to right ideas and principles. The third group of workers, the rulers and philosophers, on the strength of their prolonged training, are to become very kings in their communities. They are to be at once poets, saints, and scientific discoverers, to enjoy the "vision of all time and of all existence." The proper leisure and environment and the necessary natural endowment are simply assumed, and their possibility is hardly questioned. The intensely intellectual aspect of this ideal is peculiarly Platonic. The ethical background is common to all Greek history.

Aristotle was less idealistic and in some ways more modern in his theories. He concerned himself with the possible and the practicable. Each man must be virtuous and sound in body, also he must be capable of enjoyment and surrounded by things to enjoy. This is the spirit of Pericles' address to the Athenians, where the claims of the individual are considered and upheld. But Aristotle was far from ignoring the interests of the State. Most of his extant teaching on education is found in his *Politics*, a fact which in itself is significant. When he is describing his ideal city, the question which appeals to him most is "How shall we make our citizens good men ?" and he answers, "By education." In his city, education is to be compulsory and public ; only thus will the ideal which the State has conceived of for itself be imparted to individual citizens. Moreover, it must be uniform and universal ; otherwise

the character of the State will be varied and the strength of the State will be impaired.

Like Plato, Aristotle was sometimes apt to be blinded by the apparent glories of the Spartan system, and to overlook the possibilities of advantage in the free development of the individual.

The problem of the adjustment between the claims of the State and those of the individual grew less acute as the years went on and eliminated political activity from the life of the ordinary Greek. Education in Greece was almost imperceptibly modified to meet the changing needs of the times. When it came under Roman sway the interaction between Greek and Roman ideas produced practical results of considerable interest.

Roman education, at least before its contact with Greek ideas, differed greatly from the Greek. During most of the Republican period it was carried on in the home. The father, the *paterfamilias*, was intensely interested in the home concerns, and the Roman mother, unlike her Greek sister, whose chief glory was not to be talked about, was an important personality, whose influence it would be difficult to over-estimate.¹ The education which the Roman boy received in his early years was religious and moral training in the home. It was supplemented by gymnastic exercises, which were usually performed in the Campus Martius, and which aimed solely at military fitness; by reading and writing taught by the father; by a slight and primitive literary training, necessarily confined to religious hymns and national songs; and by an introduction to the elements of Roman law.²

¹ Cf. the well-known phrase *in gremio matris educare*.

² Cicero says that in his early days every Roman boy had to have the Twelve Tables by heart.

Such was the ordinary course of education till about 260 B.C., in which year Sp. Carvilius opened the first Roman school and took fixed fees for his tuition. The reason must be that at this period Latin literature was becoming sufficiently wide and formal to be a basis for a literary training. Nævius and Andronicus must have had literary precursors, although they are unknown to us, to prepare the form which these two helped to give the Latin tongue. Andronicus himself translated the *Odyssey* into Latin, and his version soon became a recognised textbook and was generally studied and learnt by heart by Roman boys. At the same time education became linguistic, as the Romans came more and more closely into contact with the Greeks. Greek slaves and freedmen were employed to teach the language conversationally to the children of the wealthier Roman citizens, and the children soon lived in an atmosphere which was largely Greek. Even Cato, in spite of his nationalistic prejudices, went so far as to admit that "Greek literature should be looked into, though not thoroughly studied."

This Hellenising tendency proceeded so vigorously that after Cato's death in 149 education at Rome could no longer be regarded as exclusively Roman. It was Greek education engrafted on Roman character and aims. Thus it quite naturally consisted of the three stages which have already been noticed in the Greek system: the primary, consisting mainly of the reading and writing of Latin and Greek; the secondary, under the *grammaticus*, for grammatical and literary instruction of a higher kind; and the tertiary, which was a very elaborate and technical study of rhetoric and forensic oratory, supported by such dialectic and philosophy as might be available. As early as 140 (according

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to Suetonius) there were about twenty celebrated foreign *grammatici* teaching in Rome. But it was the rhetoricians who gained most influence in the course of time, and proved most likely in the opinion of Romans of the old school to promote undue specialisation and a debased standard of taste. A *senatus consultum* of 161 and a censorial edict of 112 failed to check their influence or popularity. Cicero is one of the more attractive products of their training. During his age general opinion changed so completely to their side that we find both Cæsar and Augustus encouraging and protecting every kind of professor, not least the rhetoricians. This might have been the germ of very important benefits, of widened outlook and elevated ideals, when the Empire put an end to political activity for most citizens. But the prevailing character of the rhetorical education itself prevented this. Not only the solemn protests of Tacitus (a confirmed *laudator temporis acti*) but the satirical comments of Petronius, Juvenal, and Lucian show that the object of higher education was only too often to fit a man for success in life by a premature and unbalanced training in rhetoric. Beneath it was no foundation except a superficial acquaintance with the stock commonplaces of argumentation.

The general prospect, however, in the first and second centuries of the Empire was not altogether dark. Education was much thought about, discussed, and pursued. All the countries of the Mediterranean were rich in learned and accomplished men, and there are still extant educational writings of Seneca, Quintilian, Tacitus, the younger Pliny, Plutarch, and Musonius, which indicate how the intellectual activity of the time centred in this absorbing topic. We may note,

too, the growth of public libraries, the increasing commonness of books, the flourishing grammar-schools throughout Italy and the cities of the Empire, and the endowment of professorial chairs by Vespasian. There may have been a decline in the Roman educational aims, for the old Roman ideas were in abeyance. But the new Roman-Hellenic culture, broad, cosmopolitan, and humane, was a living force of very great value.

Brief mention must be made of Quintilian, who was born in Spain about the year of the birth of Plutarch. He went to Rome, and held one of the chairs of rhetoric endowed by Vespasian. He acquired a great reputation, and after many years' practical experience in teaching he published, as the fruits of this experience, a monumental work on the training of the orator. He defined an orator as *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, and showed that he must be a man of abundant natural gifts as well as a man of wide culture. Mere fluency of speech did not, in Quintilian's opinion, constitute the orator; the moral element was the most important. The orator must be trained in philosophy, in the widest sense of the term—in a practical philosophy, of which the main object was service to the State; for in those days an orator counted among his spheres of influence not only the bar but the forum, and his words might sway the outlook, if not the destiny, of multitudes.

Education under the Empire was at an interesting point of development. The conflicting claims of ethics and rhetoric and the mingling of Greek and Roman ideas, with their diverse traditions and suggestions, presented a problem of immediate importance to that age, and its solution was likely to be of value to posterity. We shall see how Plutarch dealt with the question.

CHAPTER III

LIFE OF PLUTARCH

THE scholar Rualdus made a melancholy study of quotations dealing with the absence of intellect among the Bœotians. He was, in consequence, much surprised to find a city of Bœotia giving birth to an eminent educator : *ortus ex illaudabili solo*, he said, *Plutarchus eo maxime laudabilis*. But the intellectual achievements of Bœotia have been somewhat underrated. The intricate rhapsodies of Pindar and the military genius of Epaminondas belied the proverb early, and when, after a long interval, the world found in Plutarch the third great intellect of Bœotia, the succession was in no way unworthy of its origin.

Plutarch was born, presumably not long before 50 A.D. at Chæronea, a small town in the extreme west of Bœotia, standing among hills a little south of the River Cephissus. It has an ancient history, for it was the Arne of the Homeric catalogue. Its later name of Chæronea was derived from its founder Charon, son of Apollo. Though it was small and out of the way, its political history was prevented from becoming dull by its obscure but certainly unhappy relations with its neighbour, Orchomenus. Twice, through no responsibility of its own, it played a large part in the world's history. Here in 338 B.C. the Macedonian supremacy over Greece was decided in battle. Over the grave of the Greeks who fell in defence of the last hope was erected a colossal monument of a lion ; no name or

date was inscribed on it, but its significance was never forgotten. Again, in 86 B.C. Sulla won at Chæronea his great victory over Mithridates' general Archelaus, and left a trophy there to mark the event. Otherwise, the life of the little town continued for centuries sedate and undisturbed, till it came to a rude end by an earthquake in 551 A.D. By Plutarch's day the population of these parts had dwindled, and the land, renowned and beautiful, was little more than a lonely sheepwalk. But we may believe that, here at any rate, the Great Pan died hard ; while in history Athens herself could hardly boast a memory of a more distinguished past.

Plutarch came of an ancient family, and was proud and frank on the subject of the family tree. His great-grandfather's memory went back to the presence of Antony in Greece.¹ His grandfather Lamprias lived to enjoy for some years a delightful intellectual companionship with the young Plutarch. He figures in the *Symposiasts* as a lively conversationalist at dinner ; like incense, he said, he was best when warmed up. Plutarch's father, too, must have been an attractive person, but curiously enough, although he frequently figures in the dialogues of the *Moralia*, he is never mentioned by name. There were two sons besides Plutarch, and they are portrayed with great vividness in their brother's writings. The elder was Lamprias, a jovial soul, much addicted to dancing and jesting, but not without interest in more serious pursuits, such as the study of etymology and of Aristotle. The younger, Timon, was of a uniformly graver disposition. The fact that he is mentioned only twice suggests that he left home early ; Volkmann ² has a plausible theory that he migrated to

¹ Antony, 68.

² *Leben, Schriften und Philosophie des Plutarch*, p. 24.

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Rome. Be that as it may, Plutarch in his essay *De fraterno amore* counts Timon's goodness of heart among the greatest blessings of his life.

Plutarch married a certain Timoxena, and by her had four sons and one daughter. Two of the sons died young, and later the little girl, who was named after her mother, died too, when not yet three years old. Plutarch was away from home at the time, and his letter of consolation to his wife, which is still extant, is one of the best known of his writings.¹ It reveals a good many intimate touches concerning Plutarch's domestic life. It is also our sole evidence for the character and attainments of Timoxena. She must have been altogether lovable and efficient, but it is unlikely that she was allowed to be anything more than a complete "Hausfrau." Plutarch seems to have been fond of his womenfolk in the condescending way typical of his country, but that he had grave misgivings concerning the higher education of women is seen from his comment on Cornelia, the accomplished wife of Pompey: "But she was very modest and sober in behaviour, without brauling and foolish curiosity, which commonly young women have that are endued with such singular gifts."²

His own higher education he accepted without question. He spent probably two years at the University of Athens, where there were still philosophers, though Sulla had long before cut down the woods of the Academy. From his essay *De recta ratione audiendi* we may conclude that the experiences of the lecture-room do not differ from age to age, for his

¹ It is said that Montaigne gave it to his wife when she was stricken with a like sorrow.

² North's Translation.

account of the conflicting elements of ragging and serious study are clearly based on personal reminiscence. In Athens he lived in the atmosphere of a glorious past, and while he devoted himself mainly to philosophy he touched also on rhetoric, mathematics, and medicine. His tutor was Ammonius, a peripatetic Egyptian philosopher, then resident in Athens, where he was *strategos*. The relations between teacher and pupil seem to have been of the happiest, and formed the foundation of a friendship which lasted many years. Plutarch was still a student when (in 67) Nero paid his celebrated visit to the city. From what is known of the university life,¹ it seems likely that the students welcomed the Imperial visitor in the characteristic fashion still followed in our own day, and it is certain that Plutarch always afterwards entertained for Nero's memory an affection, which is to be explained chiefly by the amenities of those merry days.

His university course over, Plutarch spent most of the rest of his life in his native town, which, as he said, was already so small that he could not bear to make it smaller by a single citizen. Here he became *telearnch*, *agoranomus*, *archon eponymous*, and *Bœotarch*, and his writings freely imply that he was a respected figure in the little township. Like most ancient philosophers, however, he sometimes travelled. He tells, for instance, an amusing story of an embassy on which he was sent to a Roman proconsul.² He also went to Rome, at least once, probably two or three times. His motive is not clear, but seems to be connected partly with a political mission, and partly with a desire to give lectures

¹ e.g. from A. Gellius' *Noctes Atticæ* and the writings of Julian and Gregory. See also Mahaffy, *Greek Education*.

² De rp. ger. 816 D.

in the world's capital and to improve his professional status. Rome always held this latter attraction for literary men from the provinces. He owns that he knew but little Latin (and his translation of *ἄνευ πατρός* by *sine patria* suggests that he did not understate the case), but in Juvenal's "Greek City" he needed but little. There he lectured, and, if his own account is to be believed, he created a remarkable sensation. All the best people flocked to see and hear this "living library,"¹ and he acquired a number of distinguished Roman friends, including Sosius Senecio (four times consul under Nerva and Trajan), Mestrius Florus, and Fundanus. It is also said that he was tutor to Trajan, who later honoured him with consular rank, but this is doubtful.² He seems to have extended his travels in Italy, and to have gone as far north as Bedriacum. On other occasions he travelled to other countries, perhaps to Egypt, and probably to Asia, where he had friends, such as Menemachos³ and Demetrius.⁴ In Greece itself, during his later years, he went frequently to Delphi, where he held an important priesthood, and to the hot baths of Thermopylæ and Edipsus. He was also acquainted with Sparta.

In spite of all these activities he must have found plenty of time for reading, writing, and teaching. The extent of his reading is astonishing. In the *Parallel Lives* alone he quotes from two hundred and forty authors, and it appears⁵ that, like the elder Pliny, he made notes as he read; but even Pliny's total of writers,

¹ *βιβλιοθήκη ἔμψυχος*, says Eunapius Sardianus in Porphyry.

² See Gréard, ch. i, § 1.

³ De rp. ger. I.

⁴ Def. orac. 2.

⁵ De an. tranqu. 464 F.

perused on this plan, was only about a hundred, and this was justly considered prodigious by his contemporaries.

Plutarch's own compositions were written mainly in the latter part of his life. They fall into two groups. The famous *Parallel Lives* have been wonderfully popular down to the present day. Plutarch was not the creator of biography, but within the limits of this form of literature, already vaguely defined, he evolved a type peculiarly his own. He did not set out to write history. His purpose was rather ethical, and it is his great gift of moral portraiture, herein displayed to perfection, that has given his work its imperishable attraction. The parallelism is a fragile frame enough, but such was his love for the vanished glory of Greece, and his admiration for the grandeur of Rome, that it seemed a fitting way of surveying his subject. The old heroes caught life from the new, and the new were glorified in the memory of the old. All the subjects, Greek and Roman alike, are men of action. He preferred doers to talkers or dreamers, a Lycurgus to a Plato, a Pericles to a Pheidias. Yet his was an age when talking and dreaming were the chief outlets for men's activities. At such a time Plutarch could not inculcate a theory of politics by his work, but for a practical attitude towards life the lesson of his biographies will be hard to supersede.

With the second division of his writings, the *Moralia*, we shall have to deal in detail. They form a complement to the *Lives*, "setting forth what the ancients had accomplished in the world of thought, whereas the *Lives* show what they had done in the world of action."¹ The *Moralia* contain little original thought.

¹ Trench.

Plutarch could analyse and reason ; he could think, and therefore write, clearly ; but his views are wide rather than deep ; they constitute a mass rather than a structure. A great number of his essays are revised lecture notes. Practically all have some educational aim. The lecture-room was the strongest power for moral teaching that the world possessed at that time, and it is important to remember that the bulk of Plutarch's teaching was oral, fresh, vivid, before it was committed to us in the lifeless form of the written word.

The date of his death is even more obscure than that of his birth. Rualdus seeks to prove that he did not enter on the Delphic priesthood until after the death of Trajan (117), and that, as he officiated at the four-yearly ceremonies several times, he must have survived this emperor some twelve or sixteen years. It is fairly certain that he lived to a ripe old age, and enjoyed for long the renown and veneration which his kindliness and steadfastness, his vast learning and practical wisdom brought him. It has become a platitude that the greatest biographer of antiquity himself found no biographer, but his own works reveal enough to vindicate the epigram on his statue which Xylander translated from the Greek of Agathias :

Ausonii statuam decoris, Plutarche, perennis
 Hanc Chæronensi constituere tibi :
 Inter se alternis quod componenda dedisti
 Inclyta Graiugenum factaque Romulidum.
 At non ipse tamen, tibi qui contendere possit
 Scribere, nec similem tu reperire queas.

CHAPTER IV

(A) RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

If any pagans, Lord, Thy grace shall save
From wrath divine, this boon I humbly crave :
Plato and Plutarch save. Thine was the cause
Their speech supported. Thine, too, were the laws
Their hearts obeyed, and if their eyes were blind
To recognise Thee, Lord of human kind,
Needs only that Thy gift of grace be shown
To bring them, and bring all men, to the throne.¹

John the Metropolitan of Euchaita.

It is necessary first to make a brief survey of Plutarch's religion and philosophy. They must be treated together, because in his mind they were vitally connected. In his own words, τῆς φιλοσοφίας τέλος θεολογία. His conclusions are not always clear, but they are none the less interesting, for the problems from which they arise, as is inevitable, colour the whole of his teaching. Probably the issue would have been even less clear to him had he not had to contend with the whole matter with a view to his professional responsibilities. The experience is common to all teachers. It has been said that a man's felt need of religion depends on the claim he makes on life. His claim on life is inevitably proportionate to the value he sets on personal contact with others, and in no relationship does personal contact mean more

¹ The original is quoted by Wytttenbach, Preface, ch. iii, § 1.

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than in that between teacher and taught. That his religion should be as clear as possible in his own mind becomes a necessity, for he cannot come to his best in relation to his neighbours until he has rectified to the uttermost his relation to God.

A preliminary view of Plutarch's theology is desirable here, not only because it was one of the subjects admitted to his curriculum (this aspect of it will be dealt with later) but because it formed the foundation on which all his teaching was built.

The master whom he followed with least reserve was Plato, to whose writings he had devoted deep and sympathetic study. On this rests his claim to be called "the first Neo-Platonist," though we must beware of implying in the term any connotation of the particular mysticism which culminated in the so-called Neo-Platonism of Plotinus. But Plutarch, during years of reading, listening, and talking, became acquainted with many systems of theology besides Platonism. The result was that his own conception of the Divine Nature was a curious compound of philosophies, myths, and popular beliefs. Putting aside, as a secondary consideration, the polytheism which his country had inherited from a darker age, he set his faith on a personal Deity, supreme, eternal, and untouched by change,¹ the Reason which deliberately cared for the universe it had created, the Will which ordered all things in the way of beauty. God, to him, was the cause of all good, and this idea is fundamental to his theology. He clung to it steadfastly, in spite of the Stoic suggestion that this responsible God was also the cause of all evil. The contradictions of the world are the chief facts of existence which strike the intelligence of youth, and evoke

¹ De E. 20.

its most numerous and perplexing queries. Plutarch was not the first philosopher who had to explore for some answer to this perpetual riddle in order to satisfy the rising generation. To meet the impasse he postulated in the universe two opposing principles, the one of Good and the other of Evil. The latter was responsible for everything bad and destructive in Nature and in the soul of man. He may have found this dual theory in Plato's *Laws*, 896A, a passage which is often quoted in contrast with the *Timæus*, 92B, which contains a monistic theory, *πρovoία* being there the *εἰς θεός*. In the former Plato is expressing the popular view, in the latter his own metaphysical doctrine of the unification of the plurality of things. Plutarch could not follow him so far, but he accepted the two principles as competing for dominance over Matter, which was subject to the influence of both, but gravitated rather to the Good. He frequently recurs to the subject in its various aspects. In the essay *De sera numinis vindicta*, for instance, he tries to reconcile the existence of an actively benevolent Deity with the long-continued impunity of wickedness in this world. He embodies his conclusion in the form of a myth, which shows that though neither Reason nor Science could provide a real solution to the problem, he clung tenaciously to his belief that justice is done somewhere, and attributed to his God infinite patience and far-seeing care, as well as omnipotence and justice.

It was the will of this beneficent Deity that men should first prove themselves by virtue and piety; for Plutarch, to whom the Stoic doctrine of determinism¹ was most repugnant, believed in free-will,

¹ The Stoic ὄππος αἰτιῶν = *series causarum*. See J. S. Reid's note to Cicero, *Academics*, i. 29.

and it is easy to understand how this principle became the basis of his moral teaching. Its importance will be seen in greater detail when we examine his psychology. The reason why he so vigorously defended his conviction of the goodness of God was that along with this conviction must stand or fall belief in the immortality of the soul.¹ When he touches on this belief Plutarch's teaching is at its loftiest and best. It must be because the doctrine was the ultimate justification of his teaching. No one could devote himself to this service of his fellow-men if he believed them to be only the creatures of a day. A teacher must believe that he is working in line with an eternal plan, and that some power greater than himself will gather together all the fragments of his striving into a coherent and imperishable whole. Such a belief transfigures his calling; without it he has no rational defence for labouring at all.

"I think," says Plutarch, "that death is in fact a great and completely good thing, and that the soul, whose life here is no reality but a passive existence like a dream, will live there a real life."² Thus he can impress on those who learn from him a great truth—the transitional quality of what they learn. "None of the lovers of truth and of the contemplation of Being can attain complete satisfaction here. Their Reason is, so to speak, made sodden and limp by a mist of matter—the body. Yet they still look upwards, like birds, ready to take their flight from matter to a great and shining region, and they make their souls light and free of the things of mortality by studying philosophy as a preparation for death."³

¹ *De sera num. vin.*, ch. 18.

² *Non posse suaviter*, ch. 28.

³ *Ibid.*

So much of Plutarch's extant teaching is concerned with insignificant and superficial details of life, that at times one is tempted to question the value of his work. It is important to remember the great light which shone behind it all. "God is not so frivolous that, if we had nothing of the divine in us, nothing that in the least resembled His perfection, nothing eternal and stable . . . He should make such great account of us as to create us souls to flourish only for a day . . . and then to be extinguished in a moment upon any slight occasion."¹ This "something of the divine" (θεῖόν τι) is always in his mind. No detail of its life and growth is too small to be cared about. This is what makes his labour so supremely worth while. Here his theology provided the justification of his ethics.

Plutarch held to his belief in spite of all the theological difficulties which it brought in its train. Towards the reconciliation of monotheism and polytheism it provided nothing. It is not necessary here to go deeply into his doctrine of dæmonology.² It must suffice to say that to him dæmons stood between God and Man, fulfilling what, following Plato, Plutarch called the interpretative or communicative function. Their nature was partly divine and partly human. It was the human element which accounted for their baser features and rendered them suitable scapegoats for everything obscene and cruel which tradition imputed to the old polytheistic hierarchy. But the human element also enabled them to respond to man's

¹ De sera n. v., ch. 17.

² The earliest dæmonology seems attributable to Heraclitus, who said πάντα εἶναι θεῶν πληρῇ. It passed through many phases before the time of Plutarch, and was liable often to become entangled with the native polytheism of Greece.

incessant craving for some mediation between his own weakness and the perfection of God.¹ This mediation, whether it take the form of inspiration or revelation, whether it be oracular or personal, is a matter requiring the deftest handling from him who ventures to expound it. Misguided thinking on the subject may result in unwholesome juggling with emotions or distortion of facts, or at least in sentimentalism or superstition. In the age of Plutarch the question was becoming acutely difficult, for the general silence of the old oracles was causing much discussion, sarcastic among the profane and apprehensive among the pious. Plutarch, himself a priest at Delphi, sets forth his views in two treatises, *De Pythiæ oraculis* and *De defectu oraculorum*. He holds that the foundation of the oracles is rightly to be assigned to God, but that their operation depends on matter; the inspiration, which is originally divine, comes under the superintendence of the dæmons, through the medium of man, who possesses the inevitable imperfections of a mere instrument. In the *De dæmonio Socratis* he goes further, and definitely attributes to dæmons a protective care for humanity; they are said to assist the souls that strive after virtue. This doctrine, though obviously of value to a moral teacher, might in the minds of some cause confusion as to the real relations between God and Man. Plutarch has, therefore, to emphasise their function as a medium; any emotional interest is to be directed beyond them to God Himself.

¹ Plutarch owes nothing here to the Platonic theory of ideas, in spite of his strong Platonist affinities. The Platonic ideas suffered many vicissitudes; they were confused by some with the Aristotelian εἶδη, and by others with the Pythagorean numbers. In Plutarch they are practically lost.

Plutarch deals very cautiously with the emotions ; on the whole he opposes the Stoics, and accepts the exalted function of Reason portrayed by Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics*. Reason to him is "the mystagogue to Religion." A sane, cheerful, open communion with the Highest is the soul of his belief. In the *De superstitione* he makes his position clear. Of the two evils, extreme emotionalism taking form in superstition, and perverted intellectualism involving atheism, he would, if the choice had to be made, prefer the latter ; for whereas the atheist does not see God at all, the superstitious man sees Him as terrible and harsh, and to Plutarch the blank of the atheist is less disastrous, less despairing, than the distorted picture which confronts the soul of the superstitious.

We shall have to consider again his dealings with the conflicting claims of intellect and emotion. Briefly, his ideal is *μηδὲν ἄγαν* ; no single view is to be driven to extremes.

This judicial attitude of mind accounts for his remarkable eclecticism. His debts in philosophy are innumerable. Most of his theology and cosmology are taken from Plato, and much of his psychology and ethics from Aristotle. His dæmonology is considerably helped by the Neo-Pythagoreans as well as by Plato. From Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle he builds up his dual principle of Good and Evil. He often follows the Stoics, especially in their teaching that happiness and contentment come wholly from within, and that, though we cannot control circumstances, we can control the use we make of them. With the Stoics, too, he believes in man's powers to attain such serenity of soul and such detachment from the things of sense as to be a ready recipient of the revelation of God. He

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borrowed much more from the Stoics than from the Epicureans¹; he also contended at some length against the fatalism of the former and the atheism of the latter. This, too, proves his eclecticism, which may work negatively as well as positively.

It may be questioned whether a calm eclectic is as suitable a teacher as is a fervent partisan of a single view. Zealot begets zealot, even if the second zealot is in violent opposition to the first. Some say that the zealots accomplish most in the world, but there are few eras of history which have not been open to benefit from examples of broad-mindedness. Plutarch's works have been called "the *rendezvous* of all the philosophers."² His wide understanding and sympathy are everywhere apparent. Nowhere are they seen to better advantage than in the treatise *De Iside et Osiride*. Here he examines the religious ceremonies and legends of Egypt, with the object of extracting from them everything that may be consonant with and helpful to Greek religion. His conclusion is that the beliefs of other nations, when rightly understood, are simply the local forms of a universal belief, different ways of proclaiming the same truth. He finds that the need for worship and for communion with the Divine is insistent and universal always.

An eclectic chooses his doctrines, but it does not necessarily follow that he chooses the best. Yet when we watch Plutarch, as he permitted his pupils to do, in his process of selection, it is difficult to conceive of a sum-total of pagan doctrine which could give a greater serenity in the present (short of sheer ecstasy, always a

¹ His debt to the Epicureans comprised chiefly arguments to combat those tenets of the Stoics which did not appeal to him.

² Gréard.

dangerous thing to uphold, and in any case alien from Plutarch's nature) or a more confident hope for the future. Plutarch accomplished much indeed if he really substituted such an outlook for the native fears of those whom he taught. Carlyle says "the degree of vision that dwells in a man is the correct measure of the man." Plutarch had striven for his vision until it was, within the limits of the light vouchsafed to him, clear enough ; and unlike many, he was sufficiently conscious of how he had come by it to be able to teach others how to come by it too.

Hitherto

At present (and a weary while to come)
The office of ourselves . . . has been,
For the worst of us—to say they so have seen ;
For the better—what it was they saw ; the best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest.

(B) PSYCHOLOGY

It is natural to find in so devoted a follower of Plato as Plutarch that his psychology is inseparably bound up with the rest of his cosmic and religious theory. Although it may seem arbitrary to give it separate treatment, it is necessary to deal with it in special detail, as it alone explains the underlying motive of his educational theory.

In the history of education there must have been a very early stage when people carried on education without theorising about it. Not until the primitive educator realised the aims which he had in view did he begin to reflect on the whole matter, on his data and his methods as well as on his end. He saw that his pupils were not placed quite unreservedly in his hand.

They brought with them as their birthright certain possibilities and certain limitations, which had to be understood before he dared submit them to any treatment of his own. To understand these he turned to psychology. In spite of all the illumination that this subject can give, it has, until quite modern times, been strangely indifferent to considerations of age. Ancient psychologists confined their interest to the adult, with an occasional diversion into the experiences of the newborn infant. Child-study is a modern investigation. Plutarch was genuinely interested in the constitution of the human mind, and though his ideas on the subject were mainly second-hand, and, like all the ethical theory of his day, eclectic, he carefully provided that these ideas and his educational theory should be in accord. Plato's example was sufficient. But neither Plato nor Plutarch adjusted his generalisations scientifically to the peculiarities of different ages.

Discussion has long raged round the question whether theory should precede practice or practice precede theory. Any process, such as education, which demands both, probably consists of perpetual alternations between the two. Each develops the other, and the line between them is difficult to draw. Be that as it may, it is impossible not to feel that Plutarch's practice, as far as it can be judged, was more spontaneous, less artificial, than his theory. Nevertheless, because he developed his theories at some length, and because they contained for him a distinct practical value, his most important psychological studies must be briefly analysed.

The treatises dealing exclusively with this subject in the *Moralia* are four in number: *De virtute morali* and *De profectibus in virtute* (both long and detailed),

and *De virtute et vitio* and *Virtutem doceri posse* (both short and slight). Of these, the first and the fourth are sometimes considered not to be genuine works of Plutarch.

About *De virtute morali*, at least, there is some doubt.¹ It is cut and dried, and here and there irrelevant. Its debt to Plato and Aristotle is great and obvious. It certainly tallies in general principles with the other psychological essays in the *Moralia*, and since it appears to represent Plutarch's views it is worth a short analysis. The main points are as follows :—

1. After disposing of the theories of Menedemus, Aristo, Zeno, and Chrysippus, who overlooked the dual nature of the soul, the writer states his agreement with Plato, who believed the soul to consist of two parts, the one rational (τὸ νοερόν, λογικόν) and the other irrational and subject to passion (τὸ παθητικόν). The latter can again be subdivided into the concupiscible (τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν) and the spirited (τὸ θυμοειδές); but this subdivision was rejected by Aristotle and is not important. The frequent conflicts between Reason and the irrational parts of the soul are evidence of their separate existence. The irrational parts of the soul easily become obedient to the rational, on account of the latter's superior power—a power based on gentle persuasion, not on arbitrary severity. The rational part does not attempt to eradicate the passions altogether, but to keep them within bounds, for if properly trained they may be of positive moral benefit, whereas their complete elimination would involve a corresponding loss.

¹ It is condemned by Hartman (p. 203), and accepted by Volkmann and Gréard.

2. There are three stages in the development of an irrational quality :

(i) The natural aptitude (*δύναμις*).

(ii) The passion (*πάθος*), its exercise or expression.

(iii) The habit (*ἔξις*), which results from a continual use of its exercise, and which issues in permanent good or evil according to the way in which the *πάθος* is trained. It is therefore the *πάθος* which is the main object of the educator's care.

3. Reason may be concerned with two kinds of facts : with absolute existence, which is the province of scientific or contemplative reason ; and with existence relative to ourselves, which calls for deliberative or practical reason. The former study, pure and immaterial, is the consummation of our being and makes us akin to the divine and the immortal (this is a digression). The latter deals with the irrational part of the soul, is called specifically *φρόνησις*, and is concerned with the practical subject of moral virtue. Native character having given the necessary impetus to the passion, Reason moderates the impetus, so that it may not run to any excess. The result is virtue. But we must beware of defining virtue, as some philosophers do, in general terms as moderation or a mean. For in respect of its quality, virtue is extreme perfection. Only in respect of its function of preventing excess can virtue be called a mean. For example, fortitude may be regarded as the mean between cowardice and rashness.

4. The distinction between Reason and Passion cannot be over-emphasised. A man cannot destroy Passion by Reason, or Reason by Passion. He participates in both, and thus he can only be torn between the

two and at the best approximate to a mean. Reason itself may be divided in opinion, but that is a conflict, not between two separate elements, but between two phases of the same element. The contest is passionless, and brings no sorrow in its train. Of itself, Reason always inclines to truth and justice. When, however, Passion combats Reason, the soul is rent by two really conflicting elements. This is the chief point of the writer's psychology, as far as it is of use to the trainer of other minds. What he wants is *εὐπάθεια*, i.e. nicely adjusted conditions of the *πάθη*.

5. It is wrong to say, as some (for instance, the Stoics) do, that sins, and therefore passions—grief, fear, desire, for example—are all equal. Of course, the passions vary; Plato's grief at the death of Socrates can hardly be classed with Alexander's at the death of Cleitus. The judgments of Reason must likewise vary. But Reason and Passion can never vary into one another and become confused.

6. Reason, being a spark of the Divine, naturally rules over the irrational, which has its origin in the body. (This origin is proved by the blushing of the face, the tremblings of the limbs, and the palpitations of the heart, when passions are set in motion.) The irrational is stronger in the young, when physical vigour is most abundant, whereas Reason prevails in the old, whose bodies are becoming weak and decayed. Thus the importance of training *πάθος* early to become the ally of Reason is obvious. With due care it can be made an invaluable help in education. Modesty, desire, pleasure, pain, and ambition can be manipulated to do more than mathematics could ever achieve in setting a young man in the right way of philosophy and virtue.

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In two other passages ¹ Plutarch quotes the Aristotelian fivefold division of the soul—*φυτικόν, αἰσθητικόν, ἐπιθυμητικόν, θυμοειδές, λογιστικόν*.² He does not, however, develop it anywhere, and the allusions to it seem to be largely explained by the great fascination which the number five held for his scientific mind in certain connections.³

About the genuineness of the essay *De profectibus in virtute* there appears to be no doubt. It is dedicated (like the *Symposiacs*) to the great and good friend Sosius Senecio. Its object is to disprove the Stoics and to show that man's progress in virtue is gradual, and that he is all the time conscious of this progress. It seems to be based on the psychology of the preceding treatise, but it deals with the matter from a more practical point of view. Most of it is very shrewd and makes thoroughly entertaining reading.

Plutarch begins with a thrust at the Stoic practice of first making up theories and then trying to adjust facts to fit them. Stoic philosophers say that all men who are not perfect are equally vicious. But the way in which they themselves have preferences among the historical types of vice which they quote, refutes their own statement. Plutarch follows Plato in allowing degrees in all things, including the disorderly affections of the soul. Moral progress consists of the suppression of *πάθη*—metaphorically called diseases; and as Reason little by little sheds light upon the soul (here he indulges in a play on words) it is not unreasonable to suppose that we are con-

¹ De E., ch. 13; De def. orac., ch. 36.

² Nic. Eth. i. 10.

³ Cf. De def. orac., ch. 35 seq.; De E., ch. 7, etc.

⁴ *προκοπή* (*profectus*) is a definite Stoic term.

scious of the change which can be reasoned out by arithmetic.

A man cannot stand still in virtue. (*πάθος* is continually on its way to becoming a *ἔξις*.) Just as the oracle told the Cirrhæans that they ought to fight continuously day and night, so the wise man must maintain a constant battle with vice. If he does not fight his way forwards, he will be driven backwards. The way is made easier by practice.¹ A man must not be discouraged by his initial failures in the pursuit of virtue, nor by other people's successes in politics or in society; such successes are quite irrelevant. After all, virtue is the thing that matters, and to rid oneself of jealousy of other people's external glories is the first great step in moral progress. Outward show is worth nothing. In philosophy, for example, a man may at first be carried away by metaphysics or dialectic, on account of the great impression which they are bound to make on the less learned; as soon as his interest is turned to the less ostentatious but more helpful study of ethics, his moral progress has begun. The significance of ethics will be borne in on him more and more as time goes on, just as in a certain city it was so cold in winter that words spoken in that season were at once frozen; when summer came they thawed, and then people heard and realised what they had said in the winter.

Symptoms of moral progress are numerous, for what a man learns truly will show itself in his life. It will give him a proper spirit in argument—meekness when he is in the right, and good-temper when he is proved wrong. The more deeply he is imbued with virtue

¹ This was a commonly accepted principle in Greek ethics—*ἂν δὲ μάθοντες πράττειν, ταῦτα πράττοντες μαθήνομεν*.

the less he will talk about it. He will be readier to hear than to teach, and—supreme evidence of his improvement—he will voluntarily consult competent persons on his moral state, and will humbly take their advice.

The greater his mastery of moral philosophy, the greater will be his indifference to the outer world, to the praise or blame of other men, and to accidents and dangers on sea or land. He will become as indifferent to the vicissitudes of life as was Pyrrho's pig. His dreams will be a reliable indication of his serenity. Real indifference—*ἀπάθεια*, freedom from passion—as is said both here and elsewhere, is an attribute only of the Divine; body, *ipso facto*, involves *πάθος*. The human aim must, therefore, be *ἐνπάθεια*. This word is not actually used here, but it is said that man must increase his control over his passions, and see that the preferable among them outnumber and outweigh the less desirable.

Reason must not be left as an abstraction, but must be translated into acts. Therein lies the essence of progress. It is a stern test. It involves imitating the virtuous, not only in their prosperity but in their misfortunes. A man must be ready to face the banishment of an Aristides or the poverty of a Socrates. It will considerably affect his relations with other people. He will not be confused or dismayed at the unexpected approach of the honourable and wise. Moreover, he will rejoice to feel that his parents and teachers live to see the perfection of his virtue. The wicked man, however, cannot bear the sight of either, even in his dreams.

Finally, as he progresses he will realise that no wrong-doing is too small to need attention. Moral

life is a sacred and royal edifice. "Its foundation is truly laid in gold,"¹ and the tiniest detail counts towards the beauty and perfection of the whole.

The third essay, *De virtute et vitio*, is short, but its teaching is the same. Its main point is that virtue means happiness and wickedness unhappiness. Here, again, a man cannot get rid of wickedness suddenly and easily, as he might divorce a wife. Its removal is slow and difficult. Even if mastered in the daytime, its power may still be apparent by the way it haunts his dreams. (Plutarch believed strongly in the significance of dreams.) The conflict between Reason and Passion is still the subject of his thought. "You may heap up gold," he says, "and gather together silver, but until you have conquered the Passions of your soul you will never know happiness. But when Reason becomes dominant in your soul, when you have mastered moral philosophy and learnt to know the great ideal τὸ καλὸν κάγαθόν, you will find pleasure everywhere. Fame and obscurity, riches and poverty alike, will have no power to make or mar your independent happiness."

The last of the four chapters is particularly eloquent.

The essay *Virtutem doceri posse* is not only short, but trivial, and altogether unworthy of Plutarch. It does not develop the theme of the previous treatises, as its title seems to promise. It deals with φρόνησις, and states simply that this can be taught. But the arguments are of interest only for their absurdity. There are three :

(1) You have to learn to sing, to dance, to read, to put on your shoes and clothes, to do various other things. Therefore, it is impossible to deny that the

¹ Pindar, Fr. 206.

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sum-total of these accomplishments, τὸ εὖ βιοῦν, respectable living, can be acquired without learning.

(2) If you say that virtue cannot be taught, you say that it does not exist.

(3) To say that little things can be taught, and that big things are purely empirical, is as ridiculous as saying that ringworm can be cured and brain-fever cannot.

The subject had been debated for generations before Plutarch. Some thinkers held that virtue came to man *θεία τι μοίρα*. The author of this essay appears to have been unjustifiably proud of his first lessons in logic, though not deeply versed in philosophy.

These four essays speak for themselves up to a certain point, but they raise a further question which is important—namely, what is the relation between soul and body? This question interested Plutarch, but unfortunately his investigation of it has survived only in an incomplete form. In the fragment *De libidine et ægritudine* the problem propounded is whether a *πάθος*, e.g. desire and grief, is of the body or of the soul.

The philosophers, he says, vary in their opinions. Strato says that all sensation (of a blow, for instance), is in τὸ ἡγεμονικόν—the soul. Others attribute reason and opinion to the body, saying they are moulded by the body's natural qualities and aptitudes.

Posidonius postulates a fourfold division of *πάθη*:

- (1) Those of the soul, e.g. desire, fear, anger.
- (2) Those of the body, e.g. fevers, shivering fits.
- (3) Those of the body in respect of the soul, e.g. lethargy, melancholia.
- (4) Those of the soul in respect of the body, e.g. paleness, trembling.

Diodotus, on the contrary, says it is impossible to define the limit between body and soul ; and others pursuing this train of thought say that *πάθος* belongs to a man as a whole, not to a particular part of him. We say simply that " a man " dances, walks, is afraid, and so on, not that his body dances, or walks, or that his soul is afraid. This, says Plutarch, is begging the question. The act certainly issues from the whole man body and soul together, but the co-operation is initiated by the part which the man uses in committing the act : to identify this part is the object of this inquiry. Here, unfortunately, the essay stops.

Plutarch would have been untrue to the traditions of his country had he in practice depreciated the importance of the body. But whatever his conclusion was, as a matter of science, his predominant interest was in the soul. The fragment of his work *De anima* may be appropriately considered here. It is difficult to estimate the value of some of these passages,¹ because they seem to be merely summaries of his reading in Plato's *Phædo* and similar works. They are short and sketchy, but there is no hint here or elsewhere that he disagreed with their doctrine, and as so much of his philosophy is derived from Plato the most important of them are quoted here.

1 (iv). Knowledge is innate in us, but hidden by adventitious accretions.

2 (v). The instinct to find is evidence of reminiscence in us ; for no one would seek that of which he had no conception, and if he found it, it would be the result, not of seeking, but of chance.

3 (vii). Etymological proof : the word Truth (*ἀλήθεια*) is derived from the fact that knowledge is

¹ Teubner ed., vol. vii. 7.

the removal of forgetfulness (λήθη), i.e. reminiscence. The Muses are the children of Memory, because they lead us to seek, and she grants us to find.

4 (x). προπάθεια, previous experience, is the only explanation of certain curious phenomena, for example, of how a certain apothecary was never afraid of an asp, but was always terrified at the approach of a gadfly.

5 (xiii). A new-born child does not smile in his waking hours, but only in his sleep, when his soul is freed from the whirl of surrounding life, and relies for motive-power on its previous experience.

6 (xx). Just as to imagination a single word can conjure up the picture of a whole life, so "reasoning memory" (λογικὴ μνήμη) can proceed from any chance starting-point.

7 (xxii). Since learning is a recollection of previous experience, so there is no limit to the knowledge which the soul may acquire in an infinite future.

There is no direct Wordsworthian suggestion here that memory is clearer in childhood and becomes gradually obscured as man grows older. In the *Consolatio ad uxorem*, however, Plutarch says that the worst feature of old age is that it makes the soul weak in remembering divine things.¹ It has already been said that the importance of early years to the educator is that at this period, physical activity being at its greatest, the passions are at their strongest and most in need of moderation and control. Only later, when the body weakens, does Reason (and therefore Memory, which is one of its functions) come more nearly into its own, although it can never reach its consummation this side of the grave. The miseries of the soul encased

¹ Cf. Plat. Quæst. i, 3, fin.

in the body are coextensive with life, and this is what makes education a lifelong concern. From this point of view there is some justification for Plutarch's concentration on the psychology of the adult.

The fragment from Stobæus¹ is one of the most beautiful of Plutarch's compositions. In the dialogue of which it is an excerpt, Patrocleas (one of his kinsmen) says that of all our experiences in life the sweetest is sleep. In sleep the soul, instead of being coextensive with the body and distracted by the senses, is gathered into herself without strain or disturbance. In waking she is troubled and hindered by the activities of the body, but when freed from them in sleep she can fulfil her natural function of observation, reasoning, memory, and philosophic contemplation; of these she knows neither weariness nor surfeit. There is only one reason why the soul, though clogged by the body, clings to it still; it simply fears the mystery of what will happen after death. (Evidently memory is apt to fail here.) Yet to those who share Heraclitus' conviction as to the hereafter, even this fear is as nothing.

Plutarch's position, then, seems briefly to be this. The nature of man is dual. On the one hand is Reason, the immortal part of him, which links him with the Divine; on the other is Passion, which arises from the body. His moral state consists of a perpetual conflict between these two, neither of which can destroy the other, but one of which must always be in ascendancy over the other. How are we to make the best of Reason, which is so important on account of its immortality, and at the same time of Passion, which belongs to the body and matters a great deal for our happiness

¹ Teubner, vol. vii. 6.

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and well-being as long as we are in the body, and which also has undeniable though obscure effects upon the soul ?

Man's personal responsibility, each for himself, is evident. Plutarch's support of the doctrine of free-will has already been noticed. The function of the teacher, according to his theory, is limited. This is also the modern view. "One of the most pestilent heresies in education is the notion of the passivity of the educand."¹ The pupil is the object on which the educator acts, but as a human being he must certainly not be passive. In fact, it is of supreme importance that he should be kept in a state of activity and as far as possible of independence. He will realise in the course of time what is being done to him, and will consciously assist in the process, until at last he takes the place of the teacher for himself. "Like a good doctor, the good educator proves the efficiency of his work by making himself unnecessary."²

Plutarch recognised the necessity of the pupil's activity³ and personal responsibility, but whether he regarded himself as at any stage unnecessary is more than doubtful. He was fortunate enough to live in an age when the subtle distinction between educator and teacher was not yet discussed, and he was able to combine the two functions in his own way, without risk of adverse criticism.

Reason, on its higher plane, was concerned with absolute existence ; on its lower plane it dealt with material facts, such as the body to which it belonged and other bodies and material objects. This statement

¹ Adams, *Evolution of Educational Theory*, p. 18.

² Ibid. p. 20.

³ "The soul is always in motion" (*De an. procr.*, ch. 12).

(which we have already met in *De virtute et vitio*) is reinforced and amplified by the quotations from Plato and the accompanying commentary in *De animæ procreatione in Timæo*.¹ "When true Reason is concerned with the things of sense, and the circle of the Other, following its proper motion, imparts its intelligence to the soul, there ensue steadfast and certain opinions and beliefs. On the other hand, when it is concerned with pure contemplation, and the circle of the Same, with its true motion, gives it information, of necessity knowledge is perfected." How the soul of man can enjoy these two motions is explained by the fact that the soul of the world is correspondingly two-fold. To pursue this subject further, however, would take us too far into the cosmology of the *Timæus*, which Plutarch had studied with care and profit. Later he goes on to explain that pure Reason turns in upon itself, and moves about the Eternal, whereas the motions of sense gravitate naturally to the transient outward objects of sense. The connection between the two is very difficult. The primary power of the human soul is judgment, and this finds activity in two principles, understanding (connected with the Eternal) and sensation (connected with the particular things of sense). Reason is a mixture of both principles, and may issue, as has been seen, in real knowledge or mere opinion, using in the process imagination or memory. Imagination, the connecting link between sensation and opinion, being in a state of perpetual change, may be regarded as a component part of memory; imagination has the same relation to memory as the present has to the past. Memory deals with the Eternal. The soul is always trying to separate her two functions,

¹ Ch. 23.

but so completely are these interwoven and confused that she will not succeed so long as she is surrounded by the things of sense, that is, until the body dies.

Plutarch had in his mind an immense store of facts concerned with the world of sense. These facts he seems to have acquired during the incarnation in which we meet him, though his power of assimilating them may have been the fruit of previous experiences. Moreover, he appears to have been filled with a great desire to impart these facts to other people, and to have been convinced that the store of information thus passed on would contribute in some way to the perfection in them of the Wisdom that should prove their affinity with the Divine. So the question arises : What in his educational theory was the function of knowledge of the things of sense ?

Perhaps it is unwise to stress too much his doctrine of reminiscence. In any case it is inadequate, as it reduces education to a series of accidental joggings of the memory by diverse people and things throughout life. We cannot even be sure that it allows for improvement from one incarnation to another. In spite of its many attractions, it diminishes the glamour of the educator's ideal. Yet for Plutarch the glamour was certainly there.

Knowledge may be regarded in two ways, either as something of intrinsic value or as a means to an end. The Greeks, more than most people, possessed the love of knowledge for its own sake. Nevertheless, although this characteristic was strong in Plutarch, his ultimate hold on educational theory lay in the longer view. The explanation of his attitude lies in the twofold function of Reason already explained. Practical Reason deals with material facts, and learns to understand the

character of the outer world and to strengthen itself against the world's untoward forces. This not only enables the soul as a whole to adjust itself comfortably to its environment, but it contributes to the strength and quality of the contemplative part and allows it to pursue undisturbed its quest of pure wisdom. There is no difficulty here, once granted the idealistic basis which Plutarch inherited from Plato. "Facts," in the words of Herbert Spencer, "become faculty." The phrase might be Plutarch's. This is the belief which emboldens him to face the facts of this world, and facts may be taken to include *πάθη*, the expression of the body, as well as any verbal information that one man can give another. We have already seen the place which he gave to the training of *πάθη*. The final question before us is his mode of presentation of this information.

If the pupil depends on the acquisition of information both for his comfortable adjustment to this life and for his well-being in the Hereafter, it is clearly of great importance that facts should be rightly selected before being presented to him. He may be full of information about certain matters that do not help him in the least in either of his main objects. This problem of selection was not so great in ancient Greece as it is now, when the domain of the known has swelled to proportions far beyond the power of any one mind to assimilate. Nowadays, we perforce limit the range, and this is not without its dangers. One result is that we have produced the crammer, who feeds his pupils on what he considers the minimum necessary for a particular occasion. He never asks himself (though we have reason enough to do so) how much of his information will survive in the pupil's mind in

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time to come. The better educator is more generous, and provides wisely and thoughtfully more than the bare necessity. He allows for waste.

It has already been seen that Greece in earlier times had not been immune from crammers. The tradition was still alive in Plutarch's day. On the other hand, a perusal of the titles of the *Moralia* may cause grave misgivings whether Plutarch gave any thought to this problem of selection. In any case, the psychological aim of his generous effusion of information is now clear, and its result must be left for later judgment.

CHAPTER V

THE TRAINING OF THE BODY

THE psychology outlined in the last chapter will form the framework for the detailed analysis of Plutarch's educational theory. We shall see first how he deals with the care of the body on the purely physical side ; then how he provides for the training of the *πάθη* ; thirdly, how he proposes to impart knowledge of the "sensible" world ; and fourthly, how he leads at last to the study of pure philosophy.

The only treatise in which Plutarch deals at length with the care of the body is the *De sanitate tuenda*. It is addressed (as we should expect) to scholars and public men, not to manual workers of any kind. It gives directions chiefly for diet, but also for exercise and the general care of the health. Its main points are as follows :—

It is a good thing, when we are in health, sometimes to eat the food suitable to the sick, so that it shall not revolt us when we are ill. We must accustom our natural desires to submit to sensible treatment, and remove from our souls contempt for a diet which, though unattractive, may at times be very necessary. "Choose the best way of living, and custom will make it pleasant for you."

Even in ordinary diet we should avoid excess, though at a banquet it is often very hard for modera-

tion to be compatible with politeness to an over-generous host. Still, a clear head and a merry tongue obviously make better company than a state of drunken helplessness. To allow oneself to be persuaded to eat and drink to the point of illness shows neither good breeding nor common sense. As Socrates said, we should never eat unless hungry, nor drink unless thirsty. Excitement over a novel dish at dinner should not be allowed to sway the appetite, for such desires, being connected with both body and soul, are very violent and bring most disastrous consequences in their train. One's greatest pride should be in that moderation of appetite which conduces to health. Such moderation has a beauty and dignity of its own, and cannot properly be called antagonistic to pleasure, for no man can derive the full amount of pleasure from his business or travel or recreation if his health is not at its best. A healthy body does not entail excessive or difficult appetites. Therefore, if we become conscious of these, we must be resolute in repressing them, remembering the wise remark of Timotheus the day after he had had a light and intellectual dinner with Plato: "Those who dine with Plato never have reason to regret it the next day."

Excessive attention to diet is bad. It impairs the hardihood of the body, and hurts the natural pride of the soul. At the same time we should be ready to observe the warnings which nature always gives of impending weakness or disease. Bad dreams indicate latent trouble, and if all is well with the mind they presumably forbode ill to the body. We must, without becoming valetudinarians, cultivate a generally intelligent attitude on this subject. When we visit a sick friend, for instance, we must discuss with him the

exact cause of his disease, not to air our acquaintance with medical language, but to take warning by his unfortunate experience.

A man of studious habits will do well to practise speaking and reading aloud, for this form of exercise promotes, not actual athletic strength, but right tone and vigour of constitution. It must not degenerate into impassioned debate, for that is tiring to both body and mind. Unrestrained shouting may bring on rupture or convulsions.

To return to the subject of diet, it would perhaps be best to avoid meat altogether, but since convention has made this almost impossible, it may be taken in moderate quantities as a first course, to lay the foundations of the meal. Afterwards we may proceed to other dishes which are a more natural food to the body and have a less deadening effect upon the soul.

Among drinks, milk is to be regarded as a food rather than as a beverage. Wine is both beneficial and pleasant, if mixed with a reasonable amount of water and drunk only at the proper times. Water is excellent,¹ and two or three glasses of it should be included in our daily diet. Some men drink undiluted wine after great mental or bodily exertion, on the plea that it restores the *εὐπάθεια* required by nature. But this is not *εὐπάθεια*, it is indulgence. Nature wants a happy mean between labour and pleasure. To arrive at this we must be moderate in what we eat and mix our wine with plenty of water.

A scholar has many advantages over other men at table. Dialectic is certainly a hard digestive and leads to headache, but natural science, ethics, history, and poetry offer many alluring topics as "second course"

¹ We might compare Pindar, ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ.

to a meal and distract the banqueter from gluttony or excess.

Health is not to be bought at the price of sloth or idleness; but we must be careful to bestow our labour on creditable and necessary objects, and not fritter away our strength on petty useless occupations. Theophrastus was right in saying that if we do the latter, the soul pays a dear house-rent to its landlord the body. The body may cause much suffering to the soul, yet the soul may cause still more suffering to the body, by driving it to unreasonable lengths or in an unsuitable manner. After hard work we ought to refresh our bodies with sleep and food and such relaxation as is the mean between indulgence and austerity; for an excessive bout of pleasure is not a suitable sequel to the strain of hard work.

Tiberius used to call it ridiculous for any man over sixty years of age to call in a physician. Perhaps that is going rather far, but certainly years of experience ought to teach a man what food and what treatment suit him best. A special warning is needed for scholars, who are apt to be carried away by their studies and to overlook the claims of the body. As the ox said to the camel which refused to ease him of his burden, "You will soon have to carry not only my burden but me too." This proved to be the case when the ox soon afterwards died. The mind always has to pay the penalty for a neglected body. The best plan is to follow Plato's advice, to exercise both side by side, remembering that the most valuable result of a healthy body is unhampered activity of mind.

This essay is characterised by common sense rather than by originality. The principle of "moderation in all things" is conspicuous throughout. Plutarch

wants to produce neither the weakling bookworm nor, on the other hand, the acrobat nor the glutton. He realises that exclusive attention to either mind or body is a deplorable error, and that there is no position in life to which a healthy, well-developed body is not as invaluable an asset as a well-trained mind.

About gymnastics he says little here or elsewhere. When in the *Symposiacs*¹ he discusses the relative merits of boxing, wrestling, and running, he appears to regard them as part of the accepted scheme of man's training. Homer's mention of them probably increased their value in his eyes. The athletic distinctions of the Spartans, too, seem to have recommended gymnastics to his favour. In the *Instituta Laconica* he speaks with admiration of the Spartans' hard labour and prolonged exercises, which promoted such a healthy appetite for their mean diet, and made them so active and bold.

There is no evidence that Plutarch himself was athletic or personally interested in gymnastics. The kind of training which he recommends to the studious and scholarly rather suggests the contrary. He was indebted for most of his ideas to Plato. The older philosopher had laid down the same² fundamental principle for the training of the body as for that of the mind, namely simplicity. Simplesness of life leads in one direction to bodily health and in the other to mental sanity. The professional athlete is not the product of simplicity, and so he lives a sleepy, unintellectual existence, broken only by short periods of abnormal physical activity. Simplicity of diet is most important in bodily training. Health of the body is closely connected with self-control in the soul, and in-

¹ ii. 5.

² Rep. 403 C-412 B.

tellectual and physical training (μονσικὴ καὶ γυμναστικὴ) are both really means of influencing the soul.

If Plato had reason to deplore the richness and complexity of the food of his day, much more had Plutarch, when four hundred years or more of increasing luxury had brought the culinary art so much the nearer to perfection. Moreover, the extreme sociability of his age, revealing itself in the great importance of the dinner-party, rendered sensible dieting a difficult problem, not only for a conscientious Platonist, but for any man of common sense. Plutarch tells, in the *Symposiacs*,¹ that in the old days portions of food were equal, and were allotted to each diner irrespective of his appetite. This led to discontent at the inevitable injustice, but nothing worse ensued. In Plutarch's age, with the advent of countless new tarts, pies, cheesecakes, and other delicacies too troublesome to serve, common dishes were set in the middle of the table, and the guests were expected to help themselves. The result was snatching, pushing, and railing against both host and fellow-guests. In another passage² Plutarch pronounces his opinion that a dead-drunk man is preferable to one half-drunk, for the former is at any rate less troublesome to the rest of the party.

One of Plutarch's strongest indictments against the Epicureans is that "they make the dimensions of their pleasures like a circle, about the stomach as a centre."³ He had evidently seen enough in his own experience to make him agree with Plato in attaching importance to diet.

¹ ii. 10.

² iii. 8.

³ *Non posse*, 1098 D. In point of fact, the Epicureans supported moderation of diet as much as did the Stoics. Much of what Seneca says on the subject is derived from Epicurean writers.

His statement that it is undesirable to eat meat is amplified in the whole essay *De esu carnum*, where animal food is said to stultify the intellect and to have an unfavourable effect upon character. But Southerners are, as a rule, not a carnivorous people, so Plutarch's attitude need cause no surprise.

The scientific aspect of dietetics always interested the Greeks. The gymnastic trainer of old days had gradually limited his function to that of a dietetic doctor, while in the medical school dietetics had a traditional importance at least from the days of Hippocrates.

Plutarch was clearly interested in medicine. He must have come across systematic teaching on the subject in his university days at Athens. No great knowledge of anatomy emerges from his writings; indeed, he has some surprising theories, such as that¹ of putting the origin of the voice in the bowels. This science had advanced in Greece but slowly, owing to the Greek horror of desecrating a dead body by dissection. It was left to the medical school of Alexandria to advance the study by their vivisection of condemned criminals. Even there physiology, the understanding of function, was always far behind anatomy, the knowledge of the human structure. Plutarch was well abreast with the medicine of his day. There is an interesting reference in the essay *De sanitate tuenda* to the "methodism" of the pupils of Asclepiades, the friend of Cicero. Plutarch deprecates a vain display of medical technicalities such as *κοινότητες*,² the term used by the school which refused to direct medical treatment to any particular diseased organ of the body, but held that it was sufficient to know what was com-

¹ De san. tu. 130 B.

² 129 D.

mon to all diseases. Plutarch's tone does not imply approval of this principle. In the essay *De placitis*¹ he discusses the views of several eminent physicians, including Asclepiades and the famous Erasistratus (died 280 B.C.) on the causes of health and of the phenomena of old age.

For doctors and doctoring he had a moderate respect.² In the treatise *De vitioso pudore* he counts as one of the worst consequences of shyness the fact that it makes a man hesitate to send for the best available doctor in time of necessity. Plato said that though it was excusable enough to call in a doctor in cases of wounds or epidemics, it was disgraceful to have to employ one for indigestion or other indispositions brought on by one's own carelessness or folly. This is largely Plutarch's view. No doubt the standing of the medical profession, if so it may be called, had continually improved since Hippocrates emancipated it from the toils of witchcraft and superstitious priesthood. On the other hand, its tendency has always been to concentrate on the cure of diseases at the expense of care of conditions of health. Improvements in medicine were, even in Plutarch's day, more than counterbalanced by the growing disuse of the gymnasium.

Plutarch's fundamental aim was sound, even if the means to its attainment suffered by the conditions of his time. Juvenal was not the only man in that generation who prayed for a *mens sana in corpore sano*, though he had the genius or the luck to condense his ideal into an immortal epigram.³ Plutarch penetrated

¹ v. 30.

² Cf. *De san. tu.* 136 E.

³ Cf. Petronius, ch. 61 : *Omnes bonam mentem bonamque valetudinem sibi optarunt.*

the philosophic ideal which underlay the combination of the two. There is sound sense in his little tale of the ox and the camel. It brings home to ordinary minds the lesson which Plato wrapt in loftier language :

“ And as there are two principles of human nature, one the spirited and the other the philosophic, some God, as I should say, has given mankind two arts in answering to them (and only indirectly to the soul and body), in order that these two principles may be duly attuned and harmonised with one another. . . . And he who mingles music and gymnastic in the fairest proportions, and best attempts them to the soul, may be called the true musician and harmonist in a far higher sense than the tuner of strings.”¹

The care of the body, which at first sight is a secondary consideration, is of the utmost importance on account of its continuous effect on the soul. Nowadays we are greatly specialised. Not many doctors, fewer still gymnastic trainers among us, would count themselves philosophers. Plutarch expressly says² that experts in matters of health may be called *φιλόσοφοι* without any transgression of the proper limits of the term, since, along with *φιλόσοφοι* in the usually accepted sense, they pursue a common honourable study³ in a single vast region of research. That is the typical Greek view. There may be more in it than at first we are willing to concede.

¹ Rep. 411 E (Jowett's translation).

² De san. tu. 122 E.

³ ἐμφιλοκαλεῖν.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRAINING OF THE PASSIONS

THERE are at least six essays among the *Moralia* devoted wholly to the training of the passions, and the subject recurs in many other of Plutarch's treatises and lectures. Here his writing is best and most spontaneous, for it is based on personal observation. Plutarch was a most sociable person, judged even by the sociable standards of his age. He was continually in contact with his fellow-men, and while his sympathy with all their pleasures and sorrows was immense, his sensibility of their shortcomings and of the social disadvantages which these involved was unusually keen. He does not appear to have come across much actual crime. It was chiefly the lighter sins of life which came within his experience, and not only did his philosophy show him how deeply even small foibles might hurt their owner's soul, but his admirable breeding made him alive to the extent to which they might incommode or irritate other people. His conclusion was that, from every point of view, the natural impulses of the individual should be curbed to moderate vigour. Two of these essays may now be analysed. Both are very shrewd, sensible, and charming. The first deals with anger, a fault which may go deep and have the gravest consequences ; the second with meddlesomeness, which is less serious, but not compatible with the best manners or the highest moral tone.

The essay *De cohibenda ira* takes the form of a dialogue between a certain Sulla and his friend Fundanus. After an absence of two years, Sulla¹ returns to find his friend's fiery temperament greatly cooled; he is much less prone to anger now than in the past; and the change is the result, not of advancing years, but of the growing influence of Reason. Fundanus consents to talk about his recent experiences.

Disposition to anger, he says, needs incessant care. "Those who want to be well must take care of their health all their lives."² The best caretaker for the soul is Reason, and this should be cultivated in order that it may be ready in case of emergency. A man in a passion is too much preoccupied to listen to the exhortations of other men. Anger is proud and independent of external influence. Like a guarded tyrant, it can be overthrown only by something of its own race and household.

A prolonged fit of anger, or a series of outbursts, produces a habit (ἔξις) of anger in the soul (for which the Greeks were fortunate enough to have a special word, ὀργιλότης).³ On the other hand, a single resistance to anger is a help not only for the immediate occasion, but for the future, since it initiates a habit in the other direction. The beginning counts in all things, and there is no passion of which the origin and early development are so clear as in the case of anger. Therefore, if we are to cure ourselves of it, we must concentrate on its early stages.

¹ Sulla is well cast for the part. He reappears in Symp. ii. 3 and displays much caution and self-control in refusing to dogmatise as to whether the bird or the egg came first.

² 453 D.

³ Cf. Aristotle, Nic. Eth. 2. 7. 10, and Chapter IV (B) *supra*.

In the first place, we must not allow it to lead us to raise our voices, contort our faces, or belabour ourselves,¹ for outward expression of a passion, like physical activity in a disease, only serves to increase its strength. If we cannot compose ourselves, it is best to run away and hide. The effects of anger may be terrible or merely ridiculous ; in either case it is desirable that as few people as possible should witness them. If people realised their appearance when they are angry, there would be much less anger in the world. " If I had a careful and pleasant companion, who would show me my face in a looking-glass whenever I got angry, I should not take it at all ill." ²

Next the angry man should try to maintain control of his tongue. When a man in a passion becomes fluent there is no limit to the terrible things which he may say. To be silent in one's cups is bad manners, but nothing is more dignified than to be silent when one is angry.

To scold and kick and make an exhibition of oneself argues pettiness and weakness. Grinding of the teeth does no practical good. Such outward signs of anger are found to proceed only from the feeble-minded—women, sick persons, and the aged. Insulting cries like " Kick him, stamp on his neck, roll him in the mud ! " come more suitably from a woman than from a self-respecting man. To set up in one's soul a trophy over anger is a sign of great and triumphant strength such as keeps the passions bound down as it were by ropes and fetters. Philip, Ptolemæus, and other historical figures are examples.

Anger is more often destructive than constructive.

¹ For a remarkable parallel to this passage, see Seneca, *De Ira*, i. 1.

² 456 A.

Someone said of Philip after he had destroyed Olynthus, "He could not build another such city." Here it becomes delicately involved with the question of vengeance. For vengeance, of all things, should be calm and dispassionate, otherwise its effects fall more disastrously upon the avenger than on the avenged.

It has already been said that control of anger needs practice. Suitable objects to practise on are our slaves. It is better that they should deteriorate through our excessive forbearance than that we should degenerate by giving way to anger. In any case, it is false to suppose that a slave's fear connotes respect; continual punishment produces deceit in wrong-doing, not reformation. Moreover, the lapse of a decent interval between the crime and the punishment both ensures the latter being no more than commensurate with the former and prevents the slave from making unpleasant remarks afterwards. Offences often seem more heinous at the time of their committal than they do when reviewed calmly later. "Punishment should be inflicted, without reference to pleasure or sorrow, when Reason finds its own good time, and no opening is left for the claims of anger."¹

We can train ourselves to calmness first in small matters, such as little contretemps at dinner-parties, and the breakage of small domestic objects for which we happen to entertain a particular affection. A man who is prone to anger should avoid using anything rare or expensive, such as chased cups or precious stones, for their loss is much more likely to rouse his latent wrath than is the loss of cheap and ordinary possessions.

"Men should beware of anger in their jesting, for it

turns friendliness to hatred ; and in their discussions, for it converts the search for knowledge into a search for a quarrel ; when they sit in judgment, for it tempers power with insolence ; when they deal with children, for it discourages the young and makes them hate their studies ; when they prosper, else other people will envy them the more ; and when they are in misfortune, or others will withhold their pity.”¹

Anger is perhaps most natural when a man whom we assumed to be good proves the reverse, or when a friend who we thought loved us falls out with us in a quarrel. Then we must adapt the saying of Anaxagoras on the death of his son : “ I knew that a son of mine was but mortal.” Thus we may say : “ I knew when I bought my slave that he was not a philosopher. I knew when I made my friend that he was not without human weakness. I knew all the time that my wife was but a woman.” It is a good plan to check curiosity and to avoid meddling in other people’s business. The less we know about the doings of our servants, the pastimes of our children, the gossip of our wives, the more we shall be spared provocation for outbursts of anger.

We must remember Empedocles’ “ fast from evil.”² Some men have been known to abstain for a whole year from wine, others to dedicate a certain period to abstention from telling lies. Fundanus himself set aside a few days in which he would abstain from anger ; the few days lengthened into a few months, and he began to be aware of his progress in patience under affliction, in politeness under insult, and in restraint of passion in all circumstances. Heaven was on his side, and soon he realised that a courteous, gentle, and

¹ 462 B, C.

² νηστεύσαι κακότητος, 464 B.

amiable disposition brought pleasure to himself even more than to his friends and associates.

There is an attractive story in Aulus Gellius ¹ of how one of Plutarch's slaves, while under punishment, charged his master with inconsistency between his practice and his writings. The master refuted the charge with perfect readiness and complacency. Plutarch's general principles are here to be observed in particular application. He upholds the need for practice in the cultivation of a habit, the certainty of gradual progress, and the ultimate aim in the victory of Reason over Passion, Reason being on the side of the Divine.

The essay *De curiositate* is perhaps the best of this group of Plutarch's writings. It begins with a homely simile. If a house is so built that it is airless, dark, draughty, or unhealthy, the best thing the tenant can do is to leave it; but if some old endearing associations tie him to the spot, it may be possible to readjust windows, alter staircases, add new doors, and so on, and thus make the house reasonably convenient and habitable. Similarly, in that other house, the Body, there are certain passions, harmful and unhealthy, which make it a very undesirable residence for the tenant, the Soul; therefore, if they cannot be altogether removed, they must be moderated and adapted to suitable purposes, so that the soul may not be harmed or incommoded by their presence.

One of the *πάθη* in point is the spirit of meddlesomeness (*πολυπραγμοσύνη*). It is defined as "an interest in evils which concern other people." ² If knowledge of evil, says Plutarch, gives you so much pleasure, turn

¹ Noct. Att. i. 26.

² φιλομάθειά τις ἄλλοτρίων κακῶν, 515 D.

your researches upon your own soul, for there you will find plenty of such matter for consideration. But one characteristic of the busybody is that his own faults do not interest him. Moreover, he does not content himself with collecting obvious and common facts which everyone may discuss without causing offence, but he pries into personal matters which people particularly wish to keep private. Once an Egyptian, on being asked by a man in the street what he was carrying in a wrapper, replied very neatly, "That is why it is in a wrapper." Such a retort is appropriate to any impertinent question. The pursuit of irrelevant scandal is not without its dangers : "If a man took a taste of aconite to find out its properties, he would find that his discovery forestalled his research."¹ Other people's secrets are necessarily a danger to those to whom they are imparted ; that is why Philippides, when asked by the king Lysimachus, "What of mine can I share with you ?" replied, "Anything, O King, but your secrets."

An inquisitive mind must be directed to profitable subjects of study, to astronomy for example, or botany, or, if it has a morbid taste for horrors, to history. As a rule the busybody finds history too stale ; what he wants is something which is fresh as well as scandalous. His malignancy is the gravest aspect of his fault, for his inquisitiveness proceeds chiefly from spite and envy. A visit to the country bores him, because it is so quiet and dull. If necessary business renders such a visit inevitable, he curtails it as far as he can ; and having ascertained how many of his neighbours' cattle have died, what a poor harvest they are likely to have, and how their wine is going sour, he rushes back to town

¹ 517 A.

life, which provides more interesting questions and answers. There all the nice people avoid him, and nobody trusts him. If he would sometimes survey the result of his inquisitiveness, he would realise what worthless and contemptible trash he had collected. It is as bad as making a collection of grammatical slips from the world's literary masterpieces.

Here, then, is the man depicted vividly enough. What is the remedy? He must form a proper habit. "The formation of habit is the most effective way of diverting this Passion. . . . Let us therefore begin with comparatively small and trifling matters."¹

We may begin by refraining from reading inscriptions on tombs, and the information conveyed on posters and signposts, as we pass them. Then we must avoid looking inside the doors of other people's houses as we walk by. Probably they would reveal nothing but servants neglecting their duties, and dirty dishes lying about the floor; to have a taste for such revelations is not the mark of good breeding. Next we must steel ourselves against the attractions of other people's quarrels in the market-place, and remain indifferent when we see in the streets sudden collections of people whose motives we do not understand. Thus we shall the more easily be able to resist rushing to see a new and popular play at the theatre, while the distant din of a race-course or the noise of a circus will leave us unmoved. Finally, we may be so far above interest in other people's concerns that we may begin to cultivate indifference to what people say about ourselves and our affairs. Curiosity about ourselves is not without its dangers; the story of *Œdipus* is a terrible warning. Further, if a man comes up to us and says, "I have a

¹ 520 D.

piece of news for you," we should answer, "I would rather it were a piece of good advice or of useful information"; and when we receive a letter, instead of tearing it open at once, we should put it aside and wait a little. This last counsel Plutarch illustrates by a story.¹ One day, while he was giving a lecture at Rome, a letter was brought to one of his auditors, Arulenus Rusticus. The letter was from the Emperor Domitian, and its contents might have been of the most urgent and terrible import. But so perfect were Rusticus' manners that he refused to open it until Plutarch had concluded his lecture. The sensation created by his self-restraint was very great.

The essay ends with a solemn warning. The most terrible form which meddlesomeness can take is the political profession of sycophancy and blackmailing. The danger of being confused with these detestable professional meddlers, together with all that has been said on other aspects of the subject, should be sufficient to deter any self-respecting man from giving way to this serious fault.

There have been many worse moral lectures than this. Its principles are those of the preceding essay. It deals with a fault, which, on the evidence of many besides Theophrastus, has always been characteristic of Greece, and it is clearly directed at certain individuals whom Plutarch had in his mind. It is most varied in its appeal. It works upon a man's desire for the greatest possible good for his soul, and through this upon the highest philosophical ideals. It appeals to his self-respect, showing how contemptible and sordid his fault may be; at the same time it offers practical advice on how to improve. Lastly, it appeals to his

¹ 522 E.

care for his reputation, and shows without sparing exactly what other people think of the man who cannot mind his own business.

Four other essays on the education of the *πάθη* cannot be entirely passed over.

The first is *De vitioso pudore*. Shyness is stated to be excess of modesty, modesty being the mean between impudence and shyness. (The debt to Aristotle is obvious.) Shyness is a delicate fault to handle, for, in trying to remove it, we may easily go too far, and arrive unwittingly at the opposite fault. But its removal is most necessary, since it leads us to do so many ridiculous and unprofitable things, such as consenting to give bail for those whom we do not really trust, writing testimonials for people we do not know, and appointing as teachers for our children not those best qualified for the post but those most forward in demanding it. "It being therefore the cause of so many evils, we must try to overcome it by practice, beginning, as in other cases, with small and easy matters."¹ When we can bring ourselves to say firmly to the persistent bore, "I will see you some other time, just now I am busy," we shall be well on our way not to lend money ill-advisedly nor to commit other indiscretions through mere inability to say "No." When we are tempted to this weakness, we should remember all the previous occasions on which we have given way to it, and recall our miserable feelings at the time and afterwards. The recollection will be an effective deterrent.

The essay *De garrulitate* deals with a difficult matter, for the cure for excessive talkativeness is listening to Reason, and the talkative man is always so busy talking that he never listens to anything. Plutarch cites

¹ 530 E.

innumerable warning examples from history—from his pen they make most charming stories—showing the disastrous consequences of being a chatterbox. But the essay is not intended only as an indictment ; it is a practical attempt at cure (οὐ κατηγορίαν . . . ἀλλ' ἰατροίαν).¹ The conquest of Passion must be effected by criticism and practice. Of these, criticism must come first, for we do not practise overcoming a fault unless our judgment has first formally condemned it. (This is a new point. It argues the primacy of Reason, of which criticism [κρίσις] is a function.) We first realise the disadvantages of a Passion when Reason shows us the disgrace and harm which it entails. The chatterbox, for example, is hated where he means to be loved, he bores those on whom he wants to make a good impression, and excites ridicule when he expects to be admired. We may consider the advantages of the contrary behaviour, the virtue of terse utterance, and even the use of symbols instead of speech. Having described the personality and career of the chatterbox, Plutarch proceeds to give him practical advice. He should not obtrude himself into conversations, or take the answers out of other people's mouths. The latter is rude, even if the answer is right, and invites unpleasantness if it is wrong ; besides, the question may not have been asked in order to elicit information, but in order to make the third person feel at ease. The chatterbox should avoid those subjects on which he is most apt to become prolix. Finally, let him remember the saying of Simonides, that he had often been sorry for having spoken, but never for having held his tongue.²

¹ 510 C.

² λαλήσας μὲν πολλάκις μετενόησε, σιωπήσας δ' οὐδέποτε, 515 A.

In writing the *De cupiditate divitiarum* Plutarch makes a new departure, for he describes the development of a bad habit, not the cultivation of a good. The psychological principle is the same. A man may quench his thirst by drinking and satisfy his hunger by eating, but desire of money is not abated by the acquisition of silver and gold. He who has much is intent on getting more. "His πάθος is not poverty, but an insatiable desire for riches, proceeding from a sordid judgment quite unworthy of Reason."¹ Here κρίσις is perverted from its proper use, but it still precedes the process by which a habit is established. The miseries of the covetous man are described in picturesque detail, and it is sagely remarked that the happiness to be derived from wealth depends on the presence of witnesses to its existence. Herein lies its difference from the contentment brought by the study of philosophy, geometry, astronomy, and kindred subjects. These delight the soul even in solitude, and do not produce vanity or love of display.

The subject is summed up in one of Plutarch's finest essays, *De tranquillitate animi*. Plutarch repeats that wise men concern themselves continually with those aspects of Reason which provide suitable treatment for the Passions, so that when the Passions suddenly become restive a remedy is at hand. "It is easy to restrain the fierce passions of the soul only by the application of reasonings long present and familiar."² Reason can produce contentment in any life. "As therefore the shoe becomes shaped by the shape of the foot, and not the foot by that of the shoe, so the dispositions (διαθέσεις) of the mind adjust life to fit themselves. Not only does custom make

¹ 524 D.

² 465 C.

the best life pleasant to those that choose it, but sound thinking joined with custom makes life best and pleasantest at the same time.”¹ Man’s own responsibility and power are obvious. He cannot control circumstances, but he can control the use to which he puts them. It is always open to him to make the best of them. As the man said when he aimed a stone at a dog but hit his stepmother, “It might have been worse!” Reason is the road to mental and moral calm. A great part of the essay is taken up with the subject-matter with which Reason may concern itself in order to attain this end. It is all sensible and some of it is very amusing. The concluding chapters strike a loftier note. “There is no Reason so effectual in restraining the rush and race of the passionate element in us as that which reminds us of the Necessity which is common to all the material world. Man, being in contact with this only through the body, offers only this one handle to Fortune; in all the greatest things, in those that matter most he stands secure.”² Again: “The world is a magnificent and holy temple. Into this man comes at his birth, to gaze, not at stiff images made by human hands, but at such things as the Divine Mind has displayed as perceptible copies of the ideal world (as Plato says), containing the original principle of life and movement, the sun, the moon, the stars, rivers flowing with water that never fails, and earth nurturing her plants and creatures. So that life, being such a perfect initiation and preparation for these mysteries, ought to be full of tranquillity and joy.”³

There is no passage extant in which Plutarch attempts to enumerate the Passions which Reason

¹ 466 F.

² 475 C.

³ 477 C, D.

must combat. At the end of the fragment *Animine an corporis affectiones sint peiores*, however, there is a picturesque description of a vast multitude of people crowding and jostling together in the forum. They have not come for religious sacrifice or common merry-making. What, then, is their motive? Each man is there for a suit at law, and the origin of every suit is Passion. Wilful anger caused one, mad quarrelsomeness another, unjust covetousness a third . . .¹ Here the fragment ends. Its main point, however, has already been proved, namely, that Passions of the soul are worse than diseases of the body. The chief reason is said to be that men are often unaware that anything is wrong with their souls, and thus they neglect to take measures to cure them. "Know thyself," the act of *κρίσις* already mentioned, is to Plutarch the first step towards virtue.

The other Delphic motto, "Moderation in all things," is the essence of the second stage. It has been noticed in every essay which has so far been examined. Nowhere, perhaps, is it driven home with such effect as in the *Consolatio ad uxorem*. Plutarch and Timoxena had just lost their little daughter. "I myself know and feel the greatness of our loss; but if I should find you grieve beyond measure, that would distress me more than the loss itself."²

Clearly what Plutarch taught to others was a genuine and vital part of his own life and principles. This letter of consolation is so personal and so completely sincere that he could not import into it any mere surface teaching or empty display. It is a

¹ 502 A.

² Cf. *Consol. ad Apoll.* 102 C, D (usually considered spurious).

great thing to find his theory consistent with his practice.

His method of dealing with the Passions is in complete harmony with the principles laid down for the training of the body, with which the Passions are closely connected. If the body is kept in good form, neither strained by over-work nor relaxed by indulgence or idleness, the way is made easy for the Passions, too, to exist in a state of beneficial moderation. They will be sufficiently controlled to avoid the mischief consequent upon excess, and yet, as long as they are not completely eliminated, the soul will always benefit by their presence and their latent power for good.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRAINING OF PRACTICAL REASON

THE next consideration is the function and the training of Reason. Before an examination of the part contributed to this training by individual subjects of the curriculum, a suitable introduction may be made by reference to the essay *De recta ratione audiendi*. It deals with the proper deportment for a young man in the lecture-room, with his attitude towards his teacher, and the profit which he may expect to derive from his lectures.

The essay is in the form of a letter addressed to a young man Nicander who, being now emancipated from the bonds of childhood and come to man's estate, must be taught how to pay proper attention to those who should to some extent still guide his life and thought. It begins with a warning about the sense of hearing. Theophrastus said that of all the senses it was that most intimately connected with the Passions,¹ for neither sight, taste, nor touch could affect the soul with such perturbation as could the pernicious sounds which might be admitted by the ear. Plutarch corrects this statement, and says that hearing is connected with Reason rather than with Passion.² There are many other organs of the body which serve as avenues for the admission of vice to the soul ; the ears

¹ παθητικωτάτη, 38 A.

² λογικωτέρα μᾶλλον ἢ παθητικωτέρα.

alone provide for the passage of virtue. A man who has never listened to teaching will be like an untilled field, and soon overrun with weeds. So many people practise speaking before they are trained to listen : the one is quite as hard and quite as important as the other. " Silence is at all times an infallible adornment for youth." ¹

We come now to the lecture-room, and to instructions for the maintenance of proper attention. A student should not, in the middle of a discourse, become excited or interrupt ; even if the lecture is poor, he should restrain his feelings until the lecturer has finished. Carping at a lecture is usually the result of envy, this in its turn proceeding from inordinate ambition and love of glory. A man endowed with such qualities will never listen to Reason. Therefore, let love of glory be brought to terms with love of learning.² In criticising a discourse, we must penetrate below the surface and examine the origin of its success or failure. This is criticism at its best, and will provide a lesson even more valuable than the discourse itself. We are warned that destructive criticism is always easier than constructive.

We must not be too guileless and enthusiastic. While ready in bestowing praise, we should be cautious in giving credence. The lecturer's grey hairs or confident demeanour may make an undue impression on the unwary, and the overwhelming applause and cheers of the rest of the audience may carry away one doubtful listener if he be inexperienced. It is his duty, therefore, to consider the underlying value of the lecture, and review its effect on his mind with as much discrimination as he does that of a barber on

¹ 39 B.

² 40 B.

his hair. Let him find pleasure in his lecture, but let him not be uplifted in such a way that he issues from it humming a tune.

Tact and delicacy of feeling are required also in the propounding of difficulties. Questions should be asked at the end, not in the middle of a discourse ; they should be useful and worth attention, they should aim neither at the glorification of the student nor at the discomfiture of the lecturer, and they should not be too numerous or too frequent. If they draw down personal admonition upon the questioner, he should receive it without taking offence.

The outward signs of careful attention are many. The student sits upright in his chair, keeps his eyes fixed on the speaker, controls his facial expression, and gives no indication of boredom or preoccupation. He never frowns, fidgets, whispers to his neighbour, yawns, or looks about the room. The hearer has as definite a duty to perform as the lecturer, though some people are slow to realise this.

The student must not be daunted by the preliminary difficulties of a subject. Initial stages are certain to be hard, but they must be thoroughly grasped if success is to be attained. Therefore let the pupil always ask questions when he does not understand ; it is an invaluable help and should not be omitted through shyness or desire to spare the teacher. Nevertheless, the pupil should not allow himself to become dependent on his teacher, as some do ; “unwilling to take trouble on their own account, they (the pupils) bother the lecturer by perpetually asking questions about the same subject time after time.” They should cultivate the habit of independent thought. “When they have understood the main points, they should

put the rest together for themselves, guiding their own research with the help of their memories; they should regard the words of the lecturer as a fundamental idea which they have to work out and develop. The mind must not be likened to a vessel which has to be filled, but to a wood-pile which needs only to be kindled, in order to start the flame of original research and desire for truth. A man might go to his neighbour to borrow fire, and, finding there a bright blaze, he might settle down indefinitely to warming himself at it. Similarly, a man may come to another to get Reason, and not realise his duty of kindling a light of his own in the shape of independent thinking, but sit spellbound with delight at what he hears. . . . If, then, any further advice is required concerning listening to lectures, it is to remember the rule just laid down—to practise independent thought as well as learning,¹ so that we may acquire, not the traits of sophistry nor a fund of superficial information, but a deep-seated power of philosophic thought; good listening will thus be the introduction to good living.”²

Thus Reason is not to be lifeless or mechanical. It is to be open to the reception of unlimited material, and by itself it has to work up this material to the greatest power for good. The ideal lecture-theatre is no place for the idle or unenterprising. Again and again Plutarch recurs to the necessity for independent thought. It remains to be seen how far he follows this in practice, with reference to individual subjects. The first to be examined shall be literature and literary criticism.

¹ ἀσκεῖν ἅμα τῇ μαθήσει τὴν εὔρεσιν.

² 48 B-D.

(A) LITERATURE

Plutarch's main principles of literary criticism, as it has to be manipulated for the proper benefit of the young mind, are contained in the treatise *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat*. The Greek title, *πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν*, includes silent reading as well as listening,¹ for Greek has no word really meaning "to read to oneself." In classical times people read to themselves very seldom. Even when alone they usually read aloud, as we gather, for instance, from the story of Philip "hearing" the eunuch reading Esaias in his chariot (Acts viii. 30). It becomes evident as this essay proceeds that the sphere of the lecture-room is now enlarged to include the private study.²

Plutarch was a fervent admirer and conscientious student of all the great poets of ancient Greece. It is clear from this treatise alone that he was familiar with the works of Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Simonides, Theognis, Pindar, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Menander. All the poetry sanctioned by the admiration of previous generations comes within his survey. He could not but be aware that some of the things these poets said were of a nature to hurt the susceptibilities of the young of his own day. Nevertheless he felt that all this literature must be made to redound to the glory of the gods and of virtue. The effect produced must be good, even if it were not that

¹ This is well elucidated by Wyttenbach in the introduction to his commentary on the essay.

² An interesting commentary on this use of *ἀκούειν* is the fact that in the time of Demosthenes *ἀνήκοος*, "not hearing," was equivalent to "untaught, ignorant."

intended by the authors. So he formulated certain canons of criticism, which, briefly, are as follows :

Fiction is often more pleasing than fact, and as long as both the poet and the reader are able to discriminate between them, no harm is done by the production of fiction. For instance, Homer described the balance of Fate held by Zeus—*ἐν δ' ἐτίθει δύο κῆρε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο*—and following him Æschylus wrote a whole tragedy called *The Weighing of Souls* (*ψυχοστασία*). Everybody realised that both poets were speaking in allegory, and no one was deluded into the irreverent belief that Zeus passes his time by tipping one scale of a material balance against another. On the other hand, when Æschylus wrote in his *Niobe* :

θεὸς μὲν αἰτίαν φύει βροτοῖς
ὅταν κακῶσαι δῶμα παμπήδην θέλῃ,

he was fully convinced of the truth of this melancholy statement, and his conviction communicated itself to his audience and worked incalculable harm. A great many popular morbid beliefs about God and Death have originated in this way from the sayings of poets. To guard against this, the reader of poetry must remind himself that poets have no special claim to the understanding of such things. For information about philosophy he will naturally go to the philosophers ; and when even Socrates declared that the attainment of philosophic truth was utterly beyond him, surely poets can have no pretensions to authority on the subject !

The function of poetry, as of painting, is imitation, and from the point of view of art its merit lies in the exactness of the imitation, not in the moral worth of

the subject imitated. A picture of Medea may be a very fine painting though not an edifying object of study. The young reader of poetry must be trained to discriminate between artistic and ethical values.

Very often the poet comments on the questionable morality of the statements which his art compels him to make. Thus Homer, when he makes Achilles address Agamemnon as *οἰνοβαρές, κυνὸς ὄμματ' ἔχων, κραδίην δ' ἐλάφοιο*, condemns such an unseemly series of epithets by the adjective *ἀταρτηρά*; a bad example so qualified can do no harm. But sometimes the poet leaves his undesirable statements without any saving denunciation. In this case the student must hunt through the rest of the poet's works till he finds a quotation to form a suitable antidote. For instance, he reads in Pindar,

χρὴ δὲ πᾶν ἔρδοντ' ἀμανρῶσαι τὸν ἐχθρόν.

To this he must retort, "But, Pindar, you yourself say elsewhere,

τῷ παρ δίκαν
γλυκεῖ πικροτάτα μένει τελευτά."

Supposing the works of the poet himself fail to supply the required antidote, he must be confronted with an appropriate quotation from some other writer!

An alternative method is to interpret the offending words to mean something different from what they say. Take the Homeric lines:

ὥς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι,
ζῶειν ἀχινυμένοις.

The proper view is that Homer did not say this of men in general, but of foolish and thoughtless men, to whom he refers as "miserable" on account of their folly and thoughtlessness. A discreet use of imagination and philology may do wonders in restoring to a doubtful passage its proper moral tone.

Moreover, one must bear in mind the demands of fiction for brightness and variety. A story without any elements of surprise or pathos is very dull. Gods are often represented as subject to unexpected human weakness, and good men are said to fall from their usual standard of virtue, merely in order to make a good story. The artistic gain should not be considered to involve an actual moral loss. The more complex a character is, the more fruitful is the study which it presents to the thoughtful reader. The characters of Achilles, Agamemnon, and Odysseus are extremely subtle, and when studied attentively they are seen to contain many warnings against wickedness as well as many incentives to virtue. Moral lessons can be found even where the poet did not intend to convey them. There are countless subtle lessons in good manners in the *Iliad*. Every word a Homeric hero utters indicates character, and every character is worth analysing in detail for the sake of its moral significance. Naturally poems appeal to different people in different ways. One man may prefer the historical aspect, another may be more interested in the literary side, but to Plutarch and the pupils whom he is addressing the greatest benefit to be derived from the study of literature is improvement of character. Even the most unpromising passages can be made to contribute something to this end.

Lessons can often be extended to a wider im-

port than that which the poet intended. Hesiod said :

οὐδ' ἂν βοῦς ἀπόλοιτ', εἰ μὴ γείτων κακὸς εἴη.

The same remark is true of a dog or an ass or anything else liable to a similar mishap. Such generalisations are a very fruitful subject of thought.

Finally, all these lessons from the poets may be confirmed by reference to the philosophers. The pleasure and profit from them then increase in proportion. Homer's line :

ἡ δὲ κακὴ βουλὴ τῷ βουλευέσαντι κακίστη,

is supported by the teaching of Plato's *Gorgias* or *Republic*, while the saying of Æschylus :

θάρσει· πόνου γὰρ ἄκρον οὐκ ἔχει χρόνον,

is the sum of the doctrine of Epicurus. The advantage of such comparisons to the young mind is obvious. Poetry, in fact, fulfils the most profitable function of bridging the gulf between the foolish babblings of mothers and nurses and the astounding truths of real philosophy.

This is an amazing treatise. It shows how entirely wrapt up in the ethical outlook, how utterly devoid of historical sense, was the Chæronean philosopher. His difficulty was real. But instead of removing it, as he easily might have done, by explaining the difference of moral and religious outlook between his own age and the past, he must needs resort to this childish performance of ingenious misinterpretations and juggling with texts. He makes the moral question

predominate over everything, and strengthens it by the immensity of his erudition.

Poetry was, from the earliest times, the basis of Greek education,¹ and the demand that poets should be teachers was formulated by Plato in the *Republic*. His suggestion was that poets should be guided in their output of work by their educative function in the State. Plutarch is not concerned in a practical way with any such prospective reform. His business is only to treat the poetry already existing, so that it may appear to have a beneficial moral tone, even if the authors had not intended it. Plato saw all the moral possibilities of poetry in education, and his characterisation of the ideal poet is beyond praise. He showed how the poet has the responsibility of imprinting the first ideas on the souls of the young,² of stirring the heart and subduing the emotions by the power of heroic examples,³ and of surrounding the mind with an atmosphere of health and beauty.⁴ But it will be seen in the essays now to be examined that Plutarch was too much preoccupied with petty details, on an altogether different plane, which might conceivably offend against these canons. He could not see the great masterpieces as organic wholes; did he not actually mention the *Phædrus*⁵ by name one would think he had never heard of the dialogue which teaches this lesson. He could not appreciate the goodness of

¹ Cf. Strabo (about 24 B.C.), who declared his agreement with the ancients (i. 2. 3), οἱ παλαιοὶ φιλοσοφίαν τινα λέγουσι πρώτην τὴν ποιητικὴν εἰσάγουσαν εἰς τὸν βίον ἡμᾶς ἐκ νέων καὶ διδάσκουσιν ἥθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις μεθ' ἡδονῆς.

² *Republic*, 377 C.

³ 387 C.

⁴ 401 C.

⁵ Sympos. 613 D; X. Orat. Vit. 836 B.

these works (the goodness, not of a petty morality, but of an open transcendent beauty) apart from the literary microscope and dissecting-knife.

Plutarch's position may be made clear by a brief history of the character of Achilles in criticism. Plato in the third book of the *Republic* used Achilles as an example in making the rules for his state-poets. Poets, he said, must rob death of the terror which it held in the popular imagination ; therefore Achilles must not be described as mourning inordinately for Patroclus. They must inculcate fortitude and self-control ; therefore we must not approve the passage in which Achilles reviles his chief. They must encourage liberality ; therefore we must not sing that gifts prevail with kings, or that Achilles took ransom for Hector. All this is part of a large constructive view.

Aristotle, in treating of the delineation of literary characters, stood on the borderland between morals and æsthetics. In the *Politics* he allowed that for childhood the use of poetry is to convey moral instruction. In the *Poetics*, where he wrote as a literary critic, he maintained that the end of poetry was refined pleasure. He was the first to postulate this theory, but for long afterwards most critics reverted to the older view. It was not that Aristotle disregarded the value of the moral content of a poem ; but he held that defective characters may become ennobled by poetic treatment. Thus Achilles, who would ordinarily be classed among the ὀργίλοι, is raised to the heroic order. Aristotle makes no attempt to suppress his imperfections, for he feels that in spite of them the hero may impress our imagination and arouse our sense of grandeur.

Plutarch could not see so far into the psychological

possibilities of the character of Achilles. In the *Quomodo adolescens* Achilles figures three times at some length. In the first instance various sayings of his are quoted.¹ In one he spoke *μετρίως καὶ πρεπόντως*, in another *οὐκ ἔτ' ὀρθῶς οὐδὲ μετρίως*; the moral is obvious, and it is described in detail by Phœnix, who discourses gravely to Achilles on the nature of anger, and the lengths to which it may carry men who disregard Reason and fail to obey their advisers. Next² Achilles is quoted as a model of modest behaviour and polite manners. Finally³ he is made an object-lesson in self-control in both pleasure and grief; it is pointed out that such an object-lesson is not very obvious to the casual observer, though its interest is nevertheless considerable.

The three critics look at the matter from different points of view. Plato is thinking chiefly of Homer and poets generally, Aristotle of Achilles and literary characters generally, Plutarch of himself and his essay *De cohibenda ira*. Plato is concerned with a great end in view, Aristotle with his means, while Plutarch hardly looks beyond the material to his hand. They typify three stages in the mental development of Greece: Plato the vision, Aristotle the memory, and Plutarch the forgetting.

Plutarch is much afraid that the imitative element in art may lead the young into errors of judgment. Working on the principle that ideally all art is good, they may think a thing is morally virtuous whereas really it is only true to fact. He does not seem to have been afraid of any mischief to their emotions. In his view the question concerns only *λόγος*, not *πάθος*. Plato regarded the matter differently. To him, imitation,

¹ 26 D.² 29 A.³ 33 A.

physical or mental, could not remain imitation. If it began early and continued long, it resulted in a second nature. If, then, the young were to be taught in any way to imitate other characters, it must be such characters as we could wish them ultimately to be; "lest from imitation they catch something of the reality."¹ This warning is applied chiefly to the dramatic branch of poetry. Plutarch is much less subtle but no less grave on this question, as far as can be judged from the only essay which he devoted to drama.

Having examined Plutarch's general principles of literary criticism, we will see how he applies them to different types of ancient literature. We turn first to drama. His views on this are represented chiefly by the summary of an essay (now lost) giving a comparison of the merits of Aristophanes and Menander.² He expresses admiration of the latter's gift for the well-turned phrase, and the way in which he adapted his style to his characters, without doing violence to the canons of good taste. He heartily endorses the praise which Menander has received from many generations of the highest literary judgment. Aristophanes simply shocks him. Not only is he quite blind to the literary charms of that particular form of drama, but he considers that on the score of morals the older dramatist is to be totally condemned. Aristophanes is *βάνανσος*; this is a most crushing epithet. In style he is said to be sometimes prosaic, sometimes obscure; now trifling and now turgid. His puns and his antitheses are forced and lacking in humour. Worst of all are his numerous and terrible scurrilities;

¹ Rep. 395 C-D.

² For an interesting development of this criticism from a particular point of view, see Symp. viii. 7.

his harsh, coarse wit is in marked contrast to the generous and inspired humour of Menander.

We who know Menander chiefly through the medium of Latin versions are perhaps hardly in a position to pass judgment on Plutarch's criticism. Few will be found in these days to agree with his depreciation of the great master of Old Comedy, or admire the narrowness of vision which prevented him from looking beyond the particular type of wit which the Periclean age condoned, and perceiving the indisputable charm and value which attach to the comedies of Aristophanes. Plutarch either did not remember, or else preferred not to notice, that Aristophanes was fully aware of the didactic function commonly imputed to himself and his kind. In the *Acharnians*¹ he claims to be the best of poets by reason of the moral lessons which he gives his hearers. In the *Frogs* Euripides² is made to say :

βελτίους τε ποιούμεν
τούς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν

in answer to a very similar claim made by Æschylus³ some lines before.

Plutarch's antipathy, however, did not preclude him from knowing his author fairly well, for he quotes from him on various occasions.⁴

Turning from drama to epic, we find among the *Moralia* two essays entitled *De vita et poesi Homeri*. The first is short and superficial. The second is long, full of lessons of piety and morality, and obviously written by a man who knew his Homer exceedingly well. The first is commonly regarded as spurious.

¹ 645.

² 1089.

³ 1055.

⁴ e.g. *De Musica*, 1142 A ; *Virtutem doceri posse*, 439 E.

The second is probably genuine and repays study, especially when read with reference to the standards set up in the essay *Quomodo adolescens*.

The first statement of interest is that Homer presents in his poems not only virtues but vices, such as fears, desires and outbursts of grief. This is in order to preserve the element of the unexpected,¹ without which the reader would have no scope for the exercise of his judgment—his moral judgment. On the same principle, the gods are portrayed as mingling with men, not with a view to the reader's pleasure, but in order to emphasise the divine care for men. (§ 5.)

The two chief characteristics of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the richness of the language and the vastness of experience from which the matter is drawn² (§ 6).

First Plutarch discusses the linguistic side, beginning with the metre ("that most perfect of metres, the hexameter") and the medley of component dialects, of each of which many examples are given. He shows that the poems are rich in all kinds of figures of speech. These are enumerated, classified, and profusely illustrated by quotations—onomatopœia, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, unusual uses of tenses and persons, irony, hyperbole, and so on at great length.

He then states that Homer is the ultimate source of history, philosophy, and politics. This statement, too, is supported by countless quotations. Dealing first with history (§ 74), Plutarch shows how Homer penetrates into historical character, motive, topography, chronology, and so forth. More amazing is the detail and intricacy of the philosophy (§ 92)

¹ Cf. *Quomodo adolescens*, 25 D.

² τῆς λέξεως πολυφωνία . . . ἡ ἐν τῇ πραγματείᾳ πολυμάθεια.

which he attributes to Homer—metaphysics, theology, physical science, and ethics. It is worked out with great care, and all the intervening philosophers from Thales to the late Stoics are marshalled in formidable array to prove the truth and soundness of the Homeric speculations. Lastly he comes to politics in the widest sense of the term (§ 161), namely, all the wisdom required for the maintenance of the full life of a city. He finds in Homer the seeds of rhetoric (this theme was obviously congenial, and its position first on the list is significant); well-established law and constitutional theory; the sciences of strategy and tactics; medicine, including dietetics, gymnastics, surgery, and suggestion¹; in literature the foundations of tragedy, comedy, and epigram; and all the fundamental principles of art.

An eloquent peroration concludes the treatise, which he proposes to dedicate to the Muses "like a garland plucked from a rich and flowery meadow." He attributes to Homer the origin of all possible good, for even those ideas which could hardly have been personal to the poet are found to have come to fruition in the hands of those that came after. Such is the virtue of the poems that many have imputed to them the authority of divine oracles.²

The essay leaves the reader dazed at the erudition displayed in it. It shows not only specialised Homeric study but a far-reaching interest in other subjects. Even if Plutarch could not enjoy the stories as stories, he found in them a positive encyclopædia of information and an astonishing quantity of moral good.

¹ *μαντική* (§ 212).

² This is an interesting precedent to the *sortes Vergilianæ* of mediæval times.

His attitude is not surprising, considering the history of Homeric criticism before his day. Plato was divided between appreciation of Homer's literary charm and distrust of his poems as a compendium of moral instruction. On the one hand, he called him "the wisest of our poets"¹ and "the captain and teacher of that charming tragic company."² On the other hand, he said that Homer told lies, and not merely lies but immoral lies;³ moreover, he encouraged emotions that ought to be repressed, and produced anarchy in the soul.⁴ Aristotle combated these views. He declared that Homer taught people "to speak lies in the proper way"⁵; the reader has to make the poet certain allowances as the necessary conditions of imaginative creation. As for the immorality, the aim of poetry is not moral instruction but pleasure, though incidentally it will instruct by the nobility of the pleasure it produces. Here, again, Aristotle for long stood alone; he hardly influenced Plutarch. Among later Greeks it was always in his capacity of the educator of youth that Homer was most bitterly attacked. One school of criticism tried to improve his morality by saying that his works should be regarded as allegory. Like the Biblical critics of a later day, these scholars tried, by far-fetched symbolism and complete disregard of context and plain language, to deal with difficulties which needed a very different method of handling. Plutarch was not guiltless of such methods.

Some Alexandrian scholars disapproved not so much of Homer's supposed immorality as of his slighter lapses from the ordinary standards of respectability.

¹ *Laws*, 776 E.

² *Rep.* 595 C.

³ 377 D.

⁴ 606 A-D.

⁵ *ψευδῆ λέγειν ὡς δεῖ* (*Poet.* 24. 9).

ἀπρεπές was an adjective which they laboured to excess. It was "unseemly," for instance, for Aphrodite to set a chair for Helen.¹ This aspect of the poet appealed to Plutarch, too, for he never lost an opportunity of emphasising the importance of good manners. It recurs constantly in the *Quomodo adolescens*, where² he even quotes the well-worn example of the "unmaidenliness" of Nausicaa,³ which had already been severely dealt with by the usually wise and sound Aristarchus, as well as by other scholars.

Another phase of Homeric criticism is found in the *Symposiacs*, where such questions are raised as whether Diomedes wounded Aphrodite in the right hand or the left,⁴ and why Homer gives a particular epithet to each particular liquid, calling milk white, wine red, and so on, but qualifies oil alone with the common adjective "wet."⁵ Such critics were πολυμαθεῖς, not φιλόλογοι. Perhaps they did little harm; certainly they did little good. Plutarch may to some extent be classed among them.

From Homer we pass to Hesiod, Plutarch's own countryman. We gather that the youth under the Empire was apt to condemn the verses of this poet as prosaic, commonplace, and comparatively trifling. Copious extracts from Plutarch's *Commentarii in Hesiodum* have been preserved by Proclus. Three examples of his criticism must suffice.

(1) The phrase αἰδώς δ' οὐκ ἀγαθή [κεχρημένον ἄνδρα κομίζει]⁶ is stated to be an interpolation from Homer.⁷ Plutarch removes it from the text of Hesiod on the

¹ Il. 3. 422.

⁵ 695 F-696 D.

² 27 A.

⁶ *Works and Days*, i. 317.

³ Od. vi. 244.

⁷ Od. xvii. 347.

⁴ 739 A-E.

grounds of its incompatibility with the morals which Hesiod must be made to possess (§ 24).

(2) εὐχέσθαι δὲ Διὶ χθονίῳ.¹ Plutarch points out the virtue of praying to the gods before any undertaking; here, for instance, when the farmer grasps the plough-handle preparatory to starting down the furrow (§ 46).

(3) μέτρα φυλάσσεσθαι.² Plutarch enlarges on Hesiod's advice not to trust all one's goods to a single ship or a single waggon; as we should say, not to put all our eggs into one basket (§ 63).

Speaking generally, therefore, the profit to be derived from Hesiod lies in lessons of piety and common sense. If any suggestion in the poems appears to contravene this rule, the lines in question must be removed from the text. Plutarch deals sympathetically with the curious old Bæotian superstitions and customs which Hesiod immortalised. Apart from this patriotic tinge of his criticism (soon to be noticed in a more marked instance), he appears to have been genuinely fond of the ancient poet, whom elsewhere³ he ranks with Homer for eloquence (εὐέπεια) and beauty. In the *Commentarii*, however, he only once departs from a strictly utilitarian attitude towards him. The phrase ἐν μακάρων νήσοισι⁴ is made the *motif* of a charming little myth, very characteristic of Plutarch, about the fishermen on the shores of Britain, who at times are aroused from their sleep at night to row phantom boats crowded with

¹ W. & D. 465. Cf. De superst. ch. 8, where the emphasis is on the practical side.

² W. & D. 694.

³ De Pyth. Orac. 396 D.

⁴ W. & D. 171.

mysterious passengers to a certain part of the British coast. These are the souls of the dead voyaging to their rest (§ 8). Any subject relating to the immortality of the soul was always treated by Plutarch with particular literary grace, and with a suggestion of personal feeling which reveals more of him than he ever dreamed.

So far Plutarch appears to be the normal product of a school of literary criticism which was in many ways dull and in most ways deficient. His principles are subject to further complications when he deals with the old favourite Herodotus. He has a great grudge against the "Father of History." He devotes a whole essay, *De malignitate Herodoti*, to proving in detail and with warmth that underneath Herodotus' apparent kindness and guilelessness there lurked a malice of the most virulent kind. Here, however, Plutarch's basis of judgment is not exclusively ethical; the question is one of national pride. "Since he applies his malice chiefly to the Bœotians and Corinthians, though without really sparing any of the other Greeks, I think it is my duty to defend our ancestors and the cause of truth with regard to this one aspect of his writings; for to deal with all his lies and fictions would be a work extending to many volumes."¹ This is startling enough, and whether his main motive is personal or patriotic, it is interesting to examine his criticism and to see how young readers are to make use of the ancient historians.

Plutarch begins by laying down eight possible canons by which an historian may be judged.

1.- If he uses strong condemnatory epithets and phrases when more moderate ones would serve the

purpose, he is gratuitously unkind and allows his power of expression to run riot.

2. If he imports discreditable stories, which though true are irrelevant to the case in hand, he is indulging in unnecessary backbiting.

3. On the other hand, to omit a creditable story if it can possibly be made to appear relevant is equally vicious.

4. When there are several conflicting versions of one story, it is uncharitable to select the worst. In case of doubt one should prefer the best (not, it may be noticed, the most probable).

5. When a deed is beyond dispute, but the motive obscure, only the malicious will suggest a bad motive.

6. When a deed is obviously great and glorious, an historian should not detract from it by implying that the doer acted grudgingly or from mercenary motives.

7. Subtle and indirect condemnation of an historical personage is proof of much greater malice than is open blame.

8. To make a condemnation appear more credible by the addition of a small amount of ineffectual praise, is a clever but none the less reprehensible method of judgment.

Having established these rules, Plutarch gives instances, taken in order from the nine books of Herodotus, of how the historian breaks them. A few of his examples must suffice.

In Book I Herodotus makes Solon say of the gods that they are "envious and tumultuous."¹ This is really his own view, and by putting it into the mouth of Solon he adds to blasphemy a deliberate historical falsehood.

¹ φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες (858 A).

In Book VI he first says that the Alcmaeonidæ treacherously waved a shield as a code to convey information to the Persians. Later he declares that he cannot believe it. "You write slanders about distinguished men, and then retract what you say, obviously bringing about your own discredit."¹

In Book VII he fails to do justice to Leonidas, but Plutarch proposes to make up the deficiencies in his own "Life" of this king. In the same book Herodotus says that the Thebans fought at Thermopylæ against their will and only under compulsion. What more savage libel could there be than this?²

In Book VIII he attributes the glorious victory of Artemisium to bribery and deceit on the part of the Greeks. Even Pindar was a better historian of the event than this.³

Finally, after describing the battle of Salamis, he takes away all the glory of the victory from the Athenians and gives it to the Æginetans. Worse still—he quotes as his authority an oracle of the Delphic Apollo.⁴ (This, of course, amounted to blasphemy in the eyes of a Delphic priest.)

In fact, Plutarch continues, no greatness or glory is left to the Greeks after such a malicious perversion of their true history in the great Persian wars. Certainly Herodotus is a vivid writer and makes pleasant reading. He has charm and wit and freshness. His attractiveness only makes his blasphemy and unfairness the more insidious, just as the beauty of the rose prevents our suspecting the poisonous insect within. We must be on our guard, and not allow his literary charm to prejudice our opinions of the greatest men and cities of ancient Greece.

¹ 863 A.² 866 D.³ 867 C.⁴ 871 D.

Plutarch's particular instances are not always appropriate to his promising introductory canons, which do not, for example, make any provision for the case of blasphemy. His allowance of Herodotus' literary merit is grudging. Yet in the essay *Non posse suaviter vivi*¹ the history of Herodotus is classed with the *Persicæ* of Xenophon among those works which contain nothing to hurt or corrupt their readers, and the style of which is dignified and graceful. No one can totally acquit Herodotus of a certain superficiality and lightness of judgment. In this essay Plutarch seems obsessed by a single point, and he betrays a bitterness quite unusual in his writings. It is not literature, but religion, ethics, and national and local patriotism which he feels to be at stake. Evidently he would have agreed with Edward FitzGerald, who said, "What a pity that only Lying Histories are readable!" Plutarch cannot appreciate the close literary kinship between Herodotus and Homer, and make the same artistic allowances for the one as for the other.

A contributory cause of his attitude may have been that the writing of history was in his time passing through a critical phase. Polybius (c. 160 B.C.) found it necessary to protest against history being turned into panegyric, and his protest was repeated by Lucian (c. 160 A.D.), who in his work *De historia conscribenda* put in an earnest plea for historical accuracy of fact and sobriety of judgment. When he urges that an historian should "own no city, no king, and—except his own—no Law,"² he might almost be writing a commentary on this essay of Plutarch. The latter has definite views on the function of history,

¹ 1093 B.

² ἀπολις, αὐτόνομος, ἀβασιλευτος (§ 41).

as will shortly be seen; and when, as in the case of Herodotus, the spheres of history and literature become involved with one another, and the moral import is thus somehow doubled, his feelings become acute indeed.

He had neither a Periclean nor a modern appreciation of the old Greek masterpieces. He remains the typical literary moralist of his age, to whom the past splendours were little more than treasure-houses of maxims with which to point the rules of ordinary life. The view of the earlier Greeks, who recognised literature as the highest intellectual and spiritual influence which they knew, as an educative power informing the whole of their existence, was by Plutarch's day lost to Greece beyond recapture.

An estimate of his valuation of the written records of the past is reserved until his views on the educational function of history have been considered.

(B) HISTORY

Probably the world has produced no historical work which has attained such a great and abiding popularity as the *Parallel Lives* of Plutarch. Yet Plutarch cannot be called an historian in the proper sense of the term. He particularly disclaimed the title, saying, "I write not History, but Lives."¹

Here, as elsewhere, Plutarch's outlook is philosophic, and this lends a peculiar character to his work. Any philosophy based on Platonism is bound to present

¹ *Alexander*, i. This is important, for it is unfair to judge a man above his own published standard. Sir Walter Scott, for example, suffered much from being criticised as an historian, in spite of his protests that he set out to be, not an historian, but a romancer.

difficulties when applied to history. Platonism regarded present phenomena from an individualistic standpoint, allowing unity, or even connection, only in the world of ideas. It had no place for historical sequences or interactions. Thus Plutarch's grave fault as a writer of history is that, setting out in the first instance with an ethical prejudice, he tries to base his whole account of his heroes on their individual characters and moral judgments. He cannot see that an historical personage is but a component part of an indefinitely large organic whole, in no way free and independent of conditions of place and time. History and literature together constitute the record of the actions and thoughts of past ages. Plutarch fails with the one as he does with the other. He begins from the wrong end. Given certain moral ideas with a personal bias, which he wants to confirm and illustrate, he finds them in individual heroes of previous ages. He seems incapable of viewing the past as a great whole which merges almost imperceptibly into the present and the future. He cannot free himself from his preconceived ideas, or set out in the untrammelled spirit of adventure, which is the true spirit of research, to see what previous history had to give him.

In another way Plutarch's *Lives* owed much of their character to the philosophers. The individualistic tendency of all post-Aristotelian philosophy is conspicuous in every branch of Greek thought. The Academic and Peripatetic schools, during the period in which interest became more concentrated on individuals in history and literature, fostered the new tendency towards biographical composition by elaborating memoirs of their masters. The *Characters* of Theo-

phrastus are a further instance of this development, and during the last century or two B.C. biography became a recognised type of literature, especially at Alexandria, where scholars were encouraged to its composition by the enormous resources of the Alexandrian libraries. By Plutarch's day biography had acquired a conventional form. A "Life" began with the subject's birth, family, and education; proceeded with a delineation of his character, and a description of those events of his life most typical of it; dealt then with his death and burial, and closed with an account of his posterity and subsequent influence. The rhetorical device of comparison was as old as Isocrates, and Polybius had compared and contrasted Greeks and Romans, though not in formal biographies.

Plutarch, therefore, in his *Parallel Lives* was far from inventing a new type of literature to illustrate his educational theories. He simply found a type which could readily be adapted to serve his purpose. A short examination of his treatment of the *Lives of Alcibiades and Coriolanus* will make this clear.

The life of Alcibiades begins with an account of Alcibiades' family and a description of his personal appearance and attractive demeanour. It then deals with his education, and touches at once on his *ἦθος*, character. He is said to have been a man of very strong passions,¹ and this is illustrated by anecdotes from his childhood and boyhood. Nevertheless, Socrates' devotion to him is said to prove his innate nobility of character, for he soon realised the value of Socrates' teaching, and became more deeply attached to this master than to his flatterers and

¹ φύσει δὲ πολλῶν ὄντων καὶ μεγάλων παθῶν ἐν αὐτῷ (192 B).

younger friends ; he regarded the work of Socrates as a "provision of the gods for the care and benefit of the young."

Stories are then related to show Alcibiades' great fondness for Homer,¹ and his wonderful gift of eloquence is insisted on, with the impressive corollary that he paid due attention to both matter and style. The next subject is his heroism in battle ; he fought bravely in the company of Socrates at Potidæa and Delium. Finally we come to his extraordinary ability in politics, and this introduces the long and intricate story of the main part of his life—the diplomacy before Mantinea, the Syracusan expedition, his desertion of Athens, his curious political dealings from Samos, his triumphant return to Athens, and subsequent adventures in the East. Plutarch felt the regular Greek affection for a romantic career like that of Alcibiades, no matter how many instances of baseness and crime disfigured the story. He did not really fathom the undercurrent of Greek politics in the last years of the Peloponnesian War ; but he found it a subject well suited to his genius for anecdotage and moral deductions, and he felt, as the Athenians felt before him and his readers have felt since, the immense fascination of the brilliant and incomprehensible figure in his hands. "The Athenians even in their misery clung to the faint hope that as long as Alcibiades was alive they could not go altogether to rack and ruin."² The biography closes with a vivid account of the murder of Alcibiades in Phrygia.

¹ Love of Homer and Plato, especially when found among Romans, ensured Plutarch's favour. Cf. Cato, ch. 23 ; Marius, 2 ; Cæsar, 55 ; Brutus, 2, 4.

² 212 F.

The Roman selected as a "parallel" to Alcibiades is Coriolanus. This biography, too, begins with an account of the hero's family, and passes immediately to the subject of his upbringing and education. The underlying psychology is familiar. "He, too, proved the truth of the maxim that if a good and noble character is not submitted to training, many bad qualities are produced side by side with the good. . . . His strong and consistent courage led him to many fruitful deeds of honour, but the violence of his anger and his stubbornness in quarrel made him difficult and unpleasing in ordinary intercourse; his indifference (*ἀπάθεια*), however, to pleasure, hard work, and wealth were interpreted by his admirers as self-control, fortitude, and sense of justice respectively. . . . There is no advantage of a liberal education so great as the humanising¹ of the character by Reason and training, for from Reason the character learns how to adopt the spirit of moderation and abandon any tendency to extremes."²

The biography proceeds on conventional lines, in pursuance of this train of thought, and finally the two lives are brought into relation by the Comparison (*συγκρίσις*). The military exploits of Alcibiades and Coriolanus are briefly stated to be equally magnificent. In politics, the licentiousness of the one and the patrician pride of the other were equally detestable. These points disposed of, the last four of the five chapters of this section are devoted to a comparison of the heroes' characters. Coriolanus was open and simple-minded, Alcibiades was crafty and deceitful.

¹ *ἐξημερῶσαι*. For the same metaphor applied to education, cf. Numa, 3.

² 214 A-C.

The anger of Coriolanus was deep and inexorable, that of Alcibiades easily melted by the repentance of the offending party. (This is a guileless interpretation indeed of some of Alcibiades' actions.) Coriolanus was admired but not beloved; Alcibiades had great power of charm, and was loved by his countrymen when he should have been hated. Coriolanus was too proud to court popularity; Alcibiades owned that he liked it. Coriolanus was characterised by self-control and indifference to riches, Alcibiades by total disregard of decency and honour.

This pair of biographies is typical of the whole collection. They are all moral lectures on the same theme, and illustrate Plutarch's writings on the function of Reason and the training of the Passions. Every detail of theory which he worked out on these two points might find concrete examples over and over again in the picturesque but hardly subtle pages of the *Lives*.¹ He states his case clearly at the beginning of the Life of Nicias :—

“ Since it is impossible to pass over those actions of Nicias which Thucydides and Philistus have recorded, especially those which suggest his character and disposition, which were often hidden beneath the weight of his numerous misfortunes, I give a brief abstract of the chief points, in order to obviate any charge of unscholarliness or indolence. More recondite matters, such as are found scattered in the pages of historians or in ancient inscriptions and decrees, I have tried to collect from their sources, not with a desire to accumulate unprofitable information, but in order to provide

¹ To Sossius Senecio were dedicated not only the essay *De profectibus*, but also the *Lives* of Demosthenes and Cicero, Dio and Brutus, and Theseus and Romulus.

material for the study of this man's mind and character." ¹

Perhaps he over-estimates his scholarship in the matter of inscriptions and decrees, but he analyses his moral outlook exactly.

The *Lives* were probably written towards the close of Plutarch's career. Among the *Moralia* there are examples of the uses he made of history in his earlier years.

It has already been seen that during his visits to Rome he gave lectures, presumably with the object of making known his qualifications as a scholar and a teacher. In the essays *De fortuna Romanorum* and *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute* we seem to have actual specimens of this branch of his work. It was necessary to choose a subject in which his hearers were already instructed and interested. Contemporary politics were out of the question, but in past history the professional rhetoricians (as Juvenal tells us ²) had long found unlimited subject-matter for their lectures and discussions.

The first of these essays survives only in part. It is in the form of a debate, the point at issue being whether the power of the Roman Empire was due to Virtue or to Fortune. The extant remains are in favour of the latter. Incidents of Roman history from Romulus to Pompey are quoted to prove the unfailing favour of Fortune to Rome. The lofty interpretation of Fortune in the sense of a divine providence rather than good luck lends the passage an elevation of tone which a Roman audience could not receive otherwise than as a compliment. No doubt the cause of Virtue

¹ Nicias, 523 F-524 A.

² e.g. Sat. i.

was successfully pleaded in the section which is lost, and this would provide opportunity for further compliment. "God and Time, who laid the foundations of Rome, joined and yoked together Virtue and Fortune, that each, by performing its own function, might build up for all mankind a sacred Hearth, a centre of bounty, a firm stay and abiding support, a steady anchor amidst the fluctuating and uncertain affairs of human life."¹

The essay about Alexander is less personal. Virtue here comes into her own, and Fortune is altogether negligible. "We must refute Fortune on behalf of Philosophy, or rather of Alexander, who would be revolted at the idea of receiving his empire at the hands of Fortune, considering how dearly it was bought at the price of his lost blood and many wounds . . . in opposition to deadly powers and countless nations . . . with prudence, endurance, courage, and self-control as counsellors at his side."² Alexander is represented as speaking on his own behalf, and he grows most eloquent in enumerating the eleven occasions on which he was wounded, and the different parts of his body affected each time. But the debt which he owed to the philosophers, especially to his master Aristotle, is the main theme of the discourse. Many stories are told to illustrate his aptitude for philosophy, and his famous saying is quoted, *εἰ μὴ Ἀλέξανδρος ἤμην, Διογένης ἂν ἤμην*.³ It is related, too, that he always carried a copy of Homer with him on his expeditions, and that he believed that Homer prophesied his own virtue in the line

ἀμφότερον βασιλεύς τ' ἀγαθὸς κρατερός τ' αἵχμητής.⁴

¹ 317 A.

³ 332 A.

² 326 E.

⁴ 331 C. (Il. iii. 179).

Alexander's chief claim to renown seems here to rest on his appreciation of philosophy and literature.

Passing over a third rhetorical effort of this kind, *Bellone an pace clariores fuerint Athenienses*, we come to another phase of Plutarch's historical criticism, very similar to one observed in his dealings with literature. This is the cult of *πολυμάθεια*. The *Parallela Græca et Romana* and the *Ætia Græca* are probably spurious.¹ The *Ætia Romana* appear to be genuine, and the type of question discussed in them is as follows :—

Why are Roman husbands and wives forbidden to receive presents from one another ? Why are the days after the Calends, Nones, and Ides considered unlucky ? Why must not priests of Jupiter take oaths ? Why must the lanterns of soothsayers be open at the top ? Why is the hair of a bride parted with a spear ? Why at a horse-race is the winning horse sacrificed to Mars ?

Antiquarianism is, of course, a danger in all cultures. The Roman had a deep-rooted idea that everything ancient must be preserved. Roman antiquarians were legion, and when they began to influence the Greek *πολυμαθείς* the result was as natural as it was deplorable. This antiquarianism was closely allied to the municipal outlook which was always characteristic of history in the ancient world. *Spartam nactus es, hanc exorna*. This was the normal attitude of a citizen of those times. Probably the practical effect of this was not nearly so pernicious as Mommsen believed. Inscriptions suggest that municipal pride in a glorious past and municipal activity in contemporary enterprises were, for the majority of the provincials under the Empire, the prime motives of political existence. The disadvantages were that they narrowed men's

¹ So Hartman, Bernardakis, and Wytténbach.

outlook and obscured the significance of the Empire as a whole. At the same time they rendered people so satisfied with their present condition that any possible demands of the future appealed to them not at all. The writings of Plutarch are a natural product of this limitation of view.

What, then, does he promise his pupils from the study of the written records of the past ?

It may exercise their ingenuity in artificial debate and useless antiquarianism ; but of practical value in the present and future, to illuminate politics or help the wider issues of communal life, it gives nothing. It affords them rich subject-matter for rhetorical displays ; but the æsthetic pleasure in the process is to emanate from their own composition, not from the contemplation of other men's masterpieces. Finally, it gives countless cut-and-dried examples of Passions curbed or running riot, of Reason growing stronger or allowed to decay ; with these the young may later point a moral lecture or adorn an after-dinner conversation. But of men's wrestling with the incessant sweep of circumstance, of their inner relations with God and men, of their secret strivings with memories and hopes, ambitions and despairs, Plutarch's scholars are to gain no understanding and to carry away no remembrance. They would expect no profit from it. Their Golden Age they placed behind them. The Present offered peace, prosperity, and contentment. The Future, of which they thought but little, seemed to hold no fears and to have no need of the experiences which had gone before.

We must not belittle the value of accumulated antiquarian lore or of essay-writing on noble themes. Nor must we deny the charm and illumination of biography.

But these things do not constitute history, which is "the study of life, of growth, of variety." "Let this be our test of what is history and what is not, that it teaches us something of the advance of human progress, that it tells us of some of those mighty spirits who have left their mark on all time, that it shows us the nations of the earth woven together in one purpose, or as lit up with those great ideas and those great purposes which have kindled the conscience of mankind."¹

We are far beyond Plutarch here.

¹ Frederic Harrison, *The Meaning of History*, p. 11.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRANSITION FROM PRACTICAL TO CONTEMPLATIVE REASON

(A) NATURAL SCIENCE

IN dealing with a pre-Aristotelian writer, it would be practically impossible to separate his investigations in natural science from those in pure philosophy. Between Thales and Aristotle the philosophers left hardly any question unasked relating to matter, motion, and mind. Countless physical theories were propounded, but throughout these inquiries into nature and the constitution of the world the ultimate quest was the meaning of the Universe and the existence of God, and the means and the end of this great research were completely implicit in one another. Plato, for instance, in the system of education in the *Republic*, demanded a study of the "sciences" (by which he meant chiefly arithmetic, geometry, stereometry, astronomy, and harmonics) for the ten years between the ages of twenty and thirty. During this period, it is true, the young citizen was to serve his apprenticeship in military training. Nevertheless, the scientific study was undoubtedly to be severe. Its importance lay in the fact that it was to form an introduction¹ to the concentrated study of dialectic which was to fill

¹ Propædeutic (536 D).

the years between the ages of thirty and thirty-five. In fact, its sole object was to prepare the mind for the reception of the universal logical principles which are the goal of all the intellectual efforts of the human race.

From Aristotle onwards man was bold enough to take a scientific interest in the physical world apart from its immediate relation to its Creator. Thus in the case of Plutarch it is possible, within limits, to detach his scientific from his philosophical inquiries. They will be seen to be often on different planes, and their connection in his mind will need a careful analysis.

In reviewing his antecedents it is thus not necessary to go further back than Aristotle. Aristotle was rightly called by Dante "the master of those that knew." In his writings he summed up all the previous knowledge of the Greeks, systematised it, criticised it, and made it the material for possible further advance. He is important not only for his actual accumulation of information, but for the methods which he evolved and laid down for the handling of it. It cannot be ignored that he was himself impatient by nature, and apt to jump to conclusions and trespass in other ways against the rules he laid down. Nevertheless, for the age of Plutarch these methods were his most valuable service. Many of the works of Aristotle were lost about this time, and not recovered for several centuries, although Plutarch makes direct references to having read some of them. His collection of facts was thus held over to a later age, with the result that all through the late Roman Republic and early Empire little scientific advance was made except in the provinces of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. His methods,

however, lived on, and for the present purpose are worth a brief analysis.

His basis was the ascertainment of facts by the observance of phenomena. To gain an understanding of phenomena he relied on the evidence of the senses rather than on a process of abstract reasoning. He was fully aware that the senses of man are not infallible, but he held that no progress can be made without their assistance. Here he was in marked contrast to Plato, who so far scorned the offices of the senses that he declared the efficiency of the intellect actually to be impaired by them. The allegory of the prisoners in the cave is the standing illustration of his view. Plutarch never passed such a drastic verdict on the senses.

Again, Aristotle said that the ascertainment of facts was to serve as the groundwork of inductive reasoning. He was not the originator of this idea, but he was the first who fully appreciated its significance.

His third great rule was that an investigator must examine carefully into all the differences of opinion on the subject of his inquiry, before he may venture to arrive at a conclusion of his own.¹

The Epicureans, too, had grasped the method of inductive logic. They believed in the infallibility of the senses, and supported it to the extent of outrageous paradox. Their aim was to arrive at the unknown through the medium of the known. To Aristotle's three canons of scientific criticism the Sceptics added another—that of *ἐποχή*, or suspension of judgment in cases of doubt. The influence of these four rules may be traced in the works of Plutarch now about to be examined.

¹ He also attached great importance to the weighing of all earlier theories. He expected to find some element of truth in them all.

The technical information which was lost with the manuscripts of Aristotle partly survived and was in some ways amplified by the teaching of his pupil and successor, Theophrastus. Among the extant works of the latter are treatises dealing with fire, winds, stones, signs of storm and fine weather, colours and odours, and plants and their history. In other hands astronomy developed considerably. The most memorable worker in this field was Hipparchus of Nicæa (fl. 150 B.C.), who loved "truth above everything," and pursued his study with great acumen but on lines rather too exclusively mathematical.¹ Aratus (fl. 280 B.C.) wrote two poems which interested Plutarch—*Phænomena*, a didactic work on the constellations, and *Prognostica*, showing how to forecast the weather from the signs of the heavens.

At length, in the first century of the Empire scientific investigation had acquired a traditional form which appears with striking variations as well as striking uniformities in the works of Seneca, the elder Pliny, and Plutarch.

We will pass over the more trivial scientific questions discussed in the *Symposiacs*. Plutarch is careful to justify the practice of such discussions at the dinner-table, but stipulates that the problems propounded should be easy and familiar and of a kind neither to excite the irascible nor to alarm the nervous.² His

¹ Of course, mathematics formed his only possible scientific weapon. No progress in physical astronomy could be made before the invention of the telescope. See the article on him in the Pauly-Wissowa *Encyclopædie*.

² i. 1. Cicero's letters, too, give many instances of the practice of discussing literary, scientific, and philosophical items over the dinner-table.

main contributions to the subject may now be surveyed.

The work that claims first attention is called *De Placitis philosophorum*. Since Diels scouted the genuineness of this "wretched epitome," and assigned it to the middle of the second century, comments on it have been advisedly guarded. There seems, however, to be no harm in supposing that it is a collection of excerpts made by Plutarch in the course of his reading on scientific subjects. There is no indication that it contains any original work of his own, but its value to modern readers is for that reason none the less, seeing that in it he reproduces the opinions of Thales, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Diogenes, Anaximenes, Democritus, Xenophanes, Xenocrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Pythagoreans, thereby making a substantial contribution to our acquaintance with those ancient scientists. In Book I, science merges into philosophy ; he deals with the origin of the world, with vacuum, place, and time. In Book II, coming to the visible universe, he discusses the heaven and its circles ; the stars, and their order, position, motion, and light ; the sun, its magnitude and shape ; solstices ; eclipses ; the moon. In Book III he proceeds to lightning, thunder, rainbows, meteors, and so on ; then the earth itself, its inclination and motion, and earthquakes ; the ebbing and flowing of the sea. In Book IV he reaches man, his body and soul, the function of the senses, and respiration. Book V deals with anatomy, and the physiology of reproduction ; and finally with the growth of plants. Clearly the general scheme of the work is carefully thought out, but it shows only what Plutarch knew, not the use he made of his knowledge.

In the *Ætia Physica* the personal element is everywhere apparent, and the author of the *Ætia Romana* is clearly recognisable. One or two specimens of his inquiries must suffice.

(1) (911 F). "Why do trees and plants derive more benefit from rain-water than from irrigation?" The reasons offered give one pause. First it is said that raindrops crumble the earth by the violence of their impact with it, and thus make themselves little passages by which they can penetrate to the roots. Again, "that substance affords most nutriment which is most easily assimilated by the recipient; this is the process of digestion. Indigestion, on the other hand, follows when the substance is impossible to assimilate. Now simple, light, insipid things, such as rain-water, are easily subjected to the change involved in digestion . . . but spring-water takes the character of the earth and the places through which it passes, and acquires qualities which make it less adaptable and digestible." Lastly, it is stated that rain is sweet and good; cattle love it and frogs croak for it. A quotation from Aratus brings the arguments to a close.

(2) (913 F). "Why, if a man frequently passes by trees covered with dew, do those parts of the body which touch the trees become infected with leprosy?" This is attributed to the corrosive quality (δηκτικόν τι) of dew—a truth proved by the fact that fat women gather it in order to reduce their figures.

(3) (fr. xxxii).¹ "Why, when a man throws a stone at a dog, does the dog run after the stone and not after the man?" This may be due either to an error of judgment on the part of the dog with regard to the identity of the offending agent, or to its temporary

¹ The Latin version is given in the Teubner edition, vol. v, p. 400.

delusion that the moving stone is a wild beast and therefore his natural prey.

These and the other problems in the same work show an observation of nature, which is the first essential in introducing the young to this subject, and a spirit of inquiry into her workings, which is hardly less important. It is true that the observation is not minute and the inquiry not always intelligent. But Plutarch is following, to the best of his ability, the Aristotelian process of inductive reasoning, and even Aristotle's collections of evidence were not always beyond criticism. The Greeks had long passed the period of which Professor Butcher truly wrote that they were so close to nature that they were hardly conscious of her. Now they were beginning to appreciate the significance of her manifestations. They had arrived at a comparatively advanced stage of thought when Plutarch¹ wrote, apropos of the Egyptian worship of animals, that we must regard, not the animals themselves, but God through them. If we could be sure that this thought underlay all his *quæstiones naturales*, we could forgive much that appears trivial and superficial in his scientific writings.

The essay *De primo frigido* is more important for its method than for its matter. It is a somewhat primitive speculation on the first principle of cold.² Four theories are suggested. Of these, one is condemned straightway; the other three are all allowed to stand, and the moral is summed up in these words: ³ "Compare this with the sayings of others; if it comes near

¹ De Is. 77.

² The Greeks could hardly rid themselves of the idea that cold and heat (and colour) are *substances*.

³ 955 C.

enough to probability, have done with their opinions, remembering that in cases of doubt to suspend judgment is more becoming to a philosopher than to assent to a particular side." In view of Plutarch's usual attitude towards the Sceptics and their doctrine of ἐποχή, this is a remarkable treatise. After all, within limits, the principle is sound for the scholar and the scientist. He is also, of course, following Aristotle's advice, which in any case would probably have recommended itself to his own instincts, to weigh conflicting arguments and give due consideration to the opposing side. He was, however, aware that this principle may be carried too far. In one passage¹ he inveighs bitterly against the Stoics for their "wanton use of the faculty of argument, from motives of sheer ambition, about unprofitable or harmful topics."

The subject-matter of this essay is pursued further in the *Symposiacs*,² where we are confronted with the charming paradox that Germans wear clothes as a protection against cold and the Æthiopians as a protection against heat. Here Plutarch, under more convivial and less scientific conditions, is willing to dogmatise at least on the first principle of cold in snow.

The essay *Aquane an ignis sit utilior* is slight and rhetorical.

De sollertia animalium deals with the psychology of natural history, and makes interesting reading. It may be supplemented by the fanciful little sketch entitled *Gryllus*, in which the companion of Odysseus, when turned into a pig by Circe, enlarges on the many advantages of being an animal, and protests against the

¹ De Stoic. rep., 1037 C,

² vi. 6.

proposal to restore his human form. In a fragment of Plutarch preserved by Stobæus¹ this same story is treated as symbolical of the Platonic and Pythagorean view of the immortality of the soul. *De sollertia animalium*, in spite of its somewhat rhetorical tinge, has a definite polemical aim against the Stoics, who maintained that animals were not endowed with reason or any other faculty and might therefore be used entirely according to man's caprice and pleasure. This was a vexed question among the ancients. Plato allowed to animals the "vegetative" and "sensitive" parts of the soul. Aristotle thought they had imagination, but no more. At the opposite extreme from the Stoics stood (later) Porphyry the Neo-Platonist, who said they had Reason and forbade their consumption on that account. That Plutarch inclines to this view can be seen in his essay *De esu carniū*. But his relations with animals were very similar to his relations with slaves. He considered not so much what he owed them as animals as what he owed himself as a philosopher. Nevertheless, the result as literature is very charming, and Plutarch has fairly been called the La Fontaine of the ancient world.

The scientific works just enumerated rank Plutarch approximately with his contemporaries Seneca and the elder Pliny, especially perhaps with the latter. In sheer quantity of output Pliny surpassed him, for in his thirty-seven books of *Historia Naturalis*, "that immense register where Pliny has deposited the discoveries, the arts, and the errors of mankind,"² he touches in considerable detail on physics, geology, geography, ethnography, botany, medicine, and kindred subjects. The

¹ Teubner Plutarch, vii. p. 173.

² Gibbon.

complete work is not the result of Pliny's own research. Indeed, the character of this composition, of Seneca's *Quæstiones naturales*, and Plutarch's *Placita* suggest that there were current in those days many collections of "opinions" (δόξαι) of the older philosophers and scientists, which were available to any one interested. In the temporary absence of many of the works of Aristotle, the writings of Theophrastus probably contributed much to form the basis of this material. There was also an immense scientific literature, late in date, which called itself Peripatetic. It was a terrible age for excerpts and for second-hand knowledge. Pliny, however, must be allowed his due, for he certainly lost his life in the cause of original scientific research, while investigating the eruption of Vesuvius in 79. Plutarch has no such enterprise to his name; but if he is inclined to draw his scientific conclusions from the library rather than from the laboratory or the countryside, he has at least the beginning of a wider outlook, and it is to his credit that for range of interest he surpassed most of the Romans of his day, whose science was apt to centre in agriculture and other pursuits of a strictly utilitarian nature. Not that he was blind to the practical value of the study of nature. In the *Symposiacs*, for instance, he discussed a number of questions of this kind, e.g. why fir-trees and pine-trees cannot be grafted upon.¹ But this is not his main motive.

A word is necessary, in conclusion, on Plutarch's view of the relation between the natural and the moral sciences. The chief passage in which he deals with this subject is in *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*.² Here he quotes Chrysippus' saying that the student should learn

¹ ii. 6.

² 1035 A-D.

first logic, next ethics, and then the physical sciences, which involve and lead up to theology. Chrysippus, however, implies elsewhere that theology should form an introduction to ethics, so he stands convicted of inconsistency on a very grave subject. Plutarch's view is that it is impossible to understand and talk about God, Fate, and Providence, and to say that the world is one, finite, and governed by a single power, unless one has a thorough knowledge of *οἱ φυσικοὶ λόγοι* as a foundation. Nothing could be more sound than this. As he remarks elsewhere,¹ "the superstructure cannot be steady and sure if the foundations are weak and shaken by many doubts and troubles." If it was a little daring in those days to take Aristotle's evidence of natural phenomena and make it lead up to Plato's idealistic conclusions, at least it satisfied Plutarch as a way to the understanding of the Divine, and it is perhaps the most striking result that his eclecticism achieved in any direction.

(B) MUSIC

No wholehearted student of Plato could ignore the philosophical significance and the educational possibilities of music. Passing references to contemporary music in Plutarch's writings seem to indicate that the Platonic view of the subject had long since gone out of fashion. In one of his dinner-table conversations² there is a warning against what he calls *κακομουσία*, and the passage contains a vivid suggestion of the extravagance and sensuousness of music in his day. There it is said that the musician is so powerful for

¹ De com. not., ch. 11.

² Symp. vii. 5.

pleasure that neither cook nor perfumer can compete with him in corrupting people with his particular form of witchery. His power for evil is the greater because his influence does not stop short at the body, but penetrates to and infects the soul—the faculties of thought and judgment. The importance of music at dinner-parties was obviously increasing, and its moral effect was causing apprehension among the thoughtful. Rome was largely held to blame for this, but the provinces seem to have been quite ready to follow the fashion set by the capital. In another of Plutarch's dialogues ¹ three Greeks discuss what kind of music is most appropriate for a banquet. The types which they reject are as illuminating of the general feeling as are the types which they accept. They reject excerpts from tragedy, as being too melancholy and remote, and "Pyladean dancing" as being too solemn; but the gravest charge brought against both of these is that they rouse the Passions so easily. Excerpts from Old Comedy are set aside as they are scurrilous and not sufficiently topical; New Comedy is much preferred. The introduction of a harp to the feast has Homer's sanction, and is pleasant enough so long as it avoids homely themes. The pipe is long since connected with the libation at the beginning of a banquet, and has the additional attraction of producing an atmosphere of calm. Even so, the conclusion is that any music is an adventitious ingredient to a feast, and the man who "has the charm of the feast and a muse of his own within himself" ought to dispense with such an unnecessary aid to entertainment and digestion.

We are a long way here from Plato, and throughout

¹ Symp. vii. 8.

these and similar passages there is an underlying tone of uneasiness at the new character of music and the serious moral defects that might be laid to its charge. Even under the early Empire music was, compared with its modern form, simple and rudimentary, though it had undoubtedly increased in complexity of composition and technique since the generation which gave Plato such cause for apprehension concerning its power for evil. Man is and always has been very susceptible to the power of music, and an immense responsibility attaches to those who, however casually, by the imposition of a light, catchy, or sensuous character to what they compose, stimulate the people's *πάθη* to overstep the bounds of the moderation which few in theory would venture not to uphold.

Plutarch's treatise *De musica* is a curious mixture of an antiquarian study of Plato and other early authorities¹ and of common sense about contemporary moral problems. His object is to bring the two into relation with one another. In the earlier chapters he researches into the "invention" of music and its early history. Then he enumerates and analyses the benefits which accrue from the study of music. In the first place he looks back to the ancients, particularly to Plato. "The ancients made use of music for its intrinsic value, just as they used the other sciences. But the present generation, overlooking its lofty qualities, have substituted for the old manly, inspired, and reverent music, a relaxing and frivolous type, which they have intro-

¹ Plutarch owes much to Peripatetic writers on music. Aristoxenus of Tarentum (fl. 330 B.C.) is their chief extant representative. Roman writers seem to have had little interest in the subject. Boethius' *De institutione musica* (about 525 A.D.) is the chief Roman contribution to the study. It is published in the Teubner edition.

duced to the theatre. This was the reason why Plato, in the third book of the *Republic*, attacked such music ; he rejected the Lydian harmony as being suitable only for lamentation. . . . The Mixed-Lydian affects the Passions, and is appropriate to tragedy. . . . Since the Mixed-Lydian connotes lamentation, and the Ionian effeminacy, it is not surprising that Plato rejected both, and preferred the Doric, as being appropriate to men of self-control and warlike habits. . . . He was content with songs in honour of Ares and Athena, and with ‘spondeia,’ the slow solemn melodies sung at libations. These were sufficient to strengthen the soul of a self-controlled man.”¹

The moral tone of this passage represents completely the views of both Plato and Plutarch. Self-control—*σωφροσύνη*—is of all virtues that in which the doctrine of *μηδὲν ἄγαν* is most implicit. Then Plutarch touches briefly on the higher aspect of musical study, a subject to which he will later revert in detail. “That harmony has a solemnity, a kinship with the mighty and the divine, Aristotle, who was a pupil of Plato, explains.”² But the topic which really absorbs him at this point is the psychological effect of music. The passage is somewhat obscure, but its meaning seems to be as follows :—

“As for the senses which are present in the body, some, being heaven-born and divine, with the help of God producing sensation for men through harmony, i.e. sight and hearing, make harmony manifest with the help of voice and vision. Others, which are in conformity with them, exist, *qua* senses, according to harmony, being not inferior to the others, but proceeding from them. For the others are present in

¹ 1136 B.² 1139 B.

bodies by virtue of the presence of God, and maintain the strength and beauty of the nature in accordance with Reason.”¹

The first part of this extract seems to refer to art in the widest sense, but Plutarch follows Plato in thus considering art in only general terms; only music do they consider in detail. The probable reason is that music is concerned, far more than sculpture, painting, and other arts, with the most active Passions of the soul, and is most liable to perversion and extravagance of expression. But the aim of all art, of all life, is *ἀρμονία*. The philosophical reason of this will soon be made apparent. Meanwhile the value of the importance attached by the ancients to music is estimated thus:—

“It is thus clear why the ancient Greeks took such eminent care, and rightly too, to further education in music. For they thought, by moulding and regulating the souls of the young by means of music, to bring them to proper dignity, since clearly music is a beneficial incentive to all enterprise and serious undertaking, especially to warlike ventures. . . . It is said that among the old Greeks the use of music in theatres was unknown. They applied their whole knowledge of the art to the worship of the gods and the education of the young. . . . But in our age corruption has proceeded so far that no one remembers or troubles about the educational function of music, but all our musicians study only for the Muse of the theatre.”²

So far music has been considered chiefly in connection with the Passions. Its purely intellectual aspect is now considered.

¹ 1140 A.

² 1140 D.

“ Let a man supplement music with the learning of other things and take philosophy for his tutor, for philosophy is able to judge of the suitable and beneficial elements in music.”¹

“ A man must have two kinds of knowledge if he is going to distinguish between the genuine elements in music and the reverse ; first a knowledge of the character which is the motive of the composition, and then a knowledge of the component elements of the piece itself. We have already said enough to prove that neither knowledge of harmony nor understanding of rhythm or any other specialised branch of music can of itself enable a man to grasp the character or judge of the other aspects.”²

“ Always there are three things at least which strike the ear at the same instant—the note, the time, and the word or syllable.’ By the passage of the note we know the harmony, by that of the time, the rhythm, and by that of the word, the sense ; and as they proceed together, they necessarily strike the sense at the same time ; it is further obvious that unless the sense can discriminate between these three, it cannot follow up each individual part and appreciate the good and bad qualities of each. . . . The critical faculty must be accompanied by a power of grasping the whole”³ (συνέχεια). The master of musical technique (Plutarch continues) cannot be also a master of musical judgment or interpretation. The master of technique is too much absorbed in detail, in the individual elements of a complex performance. Final judgment

¹ 1142 D.

² 1143 D.

³ Cf. Plato, Rep., 398 D.

⁴ 1144 A.

can only be concerned with an achievement as a whole, not with its separate parts. Logically, this brings us back to two ancient principles: the first, which had been commonly accepted, but particularly emphasised at Argos, that music should be as simple as possible; the second, ascribed to Pythagoras, that judgment of music is the function not of the senses but of the mind. This at once raises music to a higher plane. The man in full possession of his mind (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων) will see how to ascribe the abuse of a study such as music not to the character of that study but to the abusers. The triumph of music in education is assured. "Therefore, if a man gives himself up to the educational benefit of music, and if he is properly cared for during his childhood, he will praise and accept the good and despise the bad, not only in music but in other things. Thus he will become clear of all meanness, and having reaped the greatest possible benefit of music, he may become of great use both to himself and to the state, abstaining from all discord in word and deed, preserving at all times and in all places a standard of propriety, self-control, and order."¹

Ultimately, music links us with the Divine. "The followers of Pythagoras, Archytas, Plato, and the rest of the ancient philosophers declared that no motion of the world or rolling of the stars could begin or continue without music, for God created all things according to harmony."² This Platonic thought occurs frequently elsewhere in Plutarch, e.g. *De animæ procreatione*.³ "Nor must we believe that the theologists, who were the most ancient philosophers,

¹ 1146 A.

² 1147 A.

³ 1030 B.

ordered the gods in their pictures and statues to be represented with musical instruments in their hands because they thought the gods no better than pipers or harpers, but to signify that no work was so appropriate to the gods as accord and harmony."

Thus we are led to appreciate music in its ideal aspect: "In reality the first and noblest function of music is the rendering of thanks to the gods; consequent on this, and second, the process of making the soul a sustained melody of purity and sweetness."¹

Practically all that Plato says in the *Republic* about the importance of music in education recurs here. Plato was keenly alive to its function in the development of character. "Rhythm and harmony sink so deeply into the inward parts of the soul, and take hold of it so strongly, and make it graceful with the grace they bring with them."² He, too, viewed the subject from both the emotional and the intellectual aspects. In the first place, he felt that music infused a feeling for order,³ and developed in a man a true love of beauty.⁴ He demanded an art which should not only stimulate but discipline the passions. He also considered that every artist holds up, as it were, a mirror in which we may see reflected the images of courage, self-control, generosity, and so on, and their opposites, and thus we may learn to know the realities when we see them. The laws of harmony and proportion, which are the conditions of beauty in art, hold good also as the condition of virtue in character, and of the immutable divinity

¹ 1146 C.

² Rep. 401 D.

³ σωφροσύνη (404 E); εὐνομία (425 A).

⁴ 402 D - 403 C.

in the universe. Without identifying or confusing artistic beauty and moral goodness Plato and Plutarch accepted this doctrine as indisputable and fundamental.

One of Plato's judgments on music appears to have been practically lost on Plutarch, although to him it might reasonably have meant much. This is the social and political importance of music. "The fashions of music are never changed," said Plato, "without changes in the more important laws of the commonwealth."¹ It is fairly certain that Plato never witnessed or dreamed of such far-reaching political changes as the slow process of corruption and decay which was beginning to affect the Roman Empire in Plutarch's day, while Chrysogonus and Pollio and their fellows sang the tune to its ultimate dissolution. This is another indication of the profound contentment which permeated the Empire in these years. The more we see what Plutarch owed to Plato, the more we realise the wide gulf between them. Plutarch was essentially an individualistic philosopher, and he upheld as lofty and ideal an education in music as could be evolved from that standpoint. Undoubtedly it meant much to him, for it was the legitimate issue of his philosophy. In his ears the morning stars had sung together, and he believed that our faint, faulty music in this world is the prelude to the perfect and eternal harmony of the universe. But such a philosophy was suited to a desert island rather than to a vast, unstable Empire. He seems to have had no feeling that music might bring man into harmony with man, or that one human soul tuned musically to another might make a music a little nearer to the perfect harmony effected when the human

¹ 424 C.

soul touches the divine. Plutarch had gone no further than the principle of "know thyself." It has taken us centuries to learn the duty of knowing other people. To understand Plutarch we must try to put aside this later learning and realise with what deliberate inward vision he went his way, and how, both in his life with men and in his approach to God, he chose undaunted to walk alone.

(C) MATHEMATICS AND ASTRONOMY

In the *Præcepta coniugalia* the new bride is recommended to address her husband thus: "Husband, you are to me guide, philosopher, and teacher of the noblest and divinest lessons." Plutarch proceeds to explain himself. "It is studies of this kind that tend to keep a woman from foolish practices. She will be ashamed to dance when she is learning geometry."¹

One or two further quotations, however, will show that Plutarch assigned to mathematics a higher function in the world than that of keeping woman out of mischief. In the essay *Non posse suaviter vivi*² he says: "We agree with Plato, who said about mathematics that, though ignorant outsiders may slight it, it thrives nevertheless by force of its real charm." Plutarch's interest in the subject had a Pythagorean bias. The Pythagorean view of number is expounded clearly and concisely in the *De vita et poesi Homeri*.³ "Pythagoras thought numbers were of supreme power, and referred everything to them, the revolutions of the stars, and the birth of living

¹ 145 C.

² 1094 C.

³ Paragraph 145.

creatures. . . .”¹ Plutarch found in number the qualities of proportion and harmony which he felt to be essential to metaphysics. It stood side by side with music, and its laws operated as much in the existence of the universe as in the smaller matters of ordinary morals. Homer, for instance, sings :

μήτ’ ἐν πολέμοις δίχα βάζειν μητ’ ἐνὶ βουλῇ,
ἀλλ’ ἓνα θυμὸν ἔχοντε νόῳ καὶ ἐπίφρονι βουλῇ.²

Plutarch himself reached an advanced stage of mathematical proficiency, and liked to apply his knowledge as far as he could to the elucidation of the highest mysteries of the universe. The *Moralia* contain several passages illustrating this, e.g. *De facie*, 935 D-E, and *De defectu oraculorum*, ch. 11. Two other instances bring him directly into touch with Platonic mathematics—*De animæ procreatione*, ch. 11-19 and 29-31, and *Quæstiones Platonicæ*, 1003 B-1004 C. In the former passage he is at pains to point out that Plato employed his mathematical skill, not to glorify his own efficiency, but to assist in the demonstration of the structure of the soul.³

It has already been observed that in one branch of science, even when the best period of Greece was past,

¹ The Pythagoreans seem to have looked to the advance of mathematics for its own sake ; not merely, as did most early Greek philosophers, as an instrument useful for astronomical inquiry.

² Od. iii. 127.

³ Plato desired mathematics to be abstracted as far as possible from a close bearing on material things, though he did not deny a place in the mathematical field to mechanics, acoustics, and astronomy. The treatment of mathematics in the *Laws* is remarkable. He claimed in that treatise to be *practical*, so mathematics takes the place which is occupied elsewhere by philosophy and dialectic. In the *Epinomis* there is practically the same point of view.

originality and progress were active and continuous. This is astronomy. Plutarch has left one important work on the subject, and this casts much light on his attitude towards science in general.

The essay *De facie in orbe lunæ* is in the form of a dialogue, and the variety of the characters in it is undoubtedly intentional. The chief speaker is Sulla (whom we have already met in the *De cohibenda ira*); he is a Carthaginian, and announces that he has a story to tell about the moon. His companions are Lamprias, the jovial brother of Plutarch, who expounds the Academic view of philosophy; Apollonius, an astronomer and geometrician; Aristotle, a Peripatetic; Pharnaces, a Stoic; Lucius, a Pythagorean, who is rather professorial in tone; Theon, a literary man; and Menelaus, a distinguished astronomer. Such a mixed company represents many points of view. That the conversation in many parts is inevitably very technical is less surprising in that age than it would be in ours, when culture and specialisation are not synonymous terms.

The discussion falls into two parts. First they review the current scientific or quasi-scientific opinions about the markings on the moon's face. Then they discuss the supernatural aspect of these markings. Astronomy in the course of its development had already become highly technical and mathematical. Plutarch himself was genuinely interested in both mathematics¹ (including their relation to astronomy) and natural phenomena, but his tastes were too miscellaneous for him to accomplish astronomical work of any great value. It is clear from this essay that he had correct notions as to the moon's size, distance, and crust-composition,

¹ Symp. ix. 14, etc.

and he believed it always to present the same face to the earth. His interest in the subject, as revealed in this essay, is twofold. In the first place, it affords opportunities for deriding the Stoics on several grounds, such as their belief that the moon is a fiery or starlike body, and not an earth. Secondly, when the dialogue loses itself in a myth (as it does in the latter half of the work, which is one of the most beautiful passages that Plutarch ever wrote), it brings his love of the mystical and the occult into full play. In contemplating through the medium of the moon the mysteries of birth and death, the existence of dæmons and their relations with both God and man, he reverts to his constant principle that the proper study of mankind is man and his destiny. In certain moods he would have agreed with the astronomer in *Rasselas*, who said: "To man is permitted the contemplation of the skies, but the practice of virtue is commanded."¹

In Plutarch's view, then, mathematics forms the basis of both music and astronomy. All three subjects are intimately related in the world of sense, and in the sphere of metaphysics they become blended into a single whole. His debt to Pythagoras, which was great and has of necessity been emphasised here, must not be allowed to obliterate what he owed to Plato. In both the Platonic and the Pythagorean philosophies the movements of the planets produce the music of the spheres. The undisciplined ear fails to recognise it only because it is never silent. The souls of men have always heard the harmony of the universe, and they find echoes of it in this life. The whole of the *Republic* is written to show that they might completely recover

¹ Quoted by O. Prickard in the introduction to his translation of the essay, p. 16.

it among the melodious influences of the perfectly educated city. Mathematics, music, and astronomy have brought us very close to the keystone of our education. The next section may be expected to reveal it.¹

¹ In this connection see Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*.

CHAPTER IX

THE EXERCISE OF CONTEMPLATIVE REASON—PHILOSOPHY

“MY first demand is that a man’s life should be clearly consistent with his doctrine. Necessary as it is (in the words of *Æschines*) that a pleader should speak in conformity with the law, it is still more important that the life of a philosopher should harmonise with his teaching. For a philosopher’s teaching is voluntary and personal, unless one supposes it to be a joke or a game of ingenuity played for applause, and not, as is really the case, a subject deserving the most serious attention.”¹

It is certainly possible to give Plutarch credit for having lived according to this principle. He accomplished what is at the best of times no mean task, and he did it in an age when most philosophers fell far short of it. In those days, practically the whole moral guidance of the world lay in the hands of the so-called philosophers, and in the absence of a press and a pulpit their power for good or evil was necessarily very great. Contemporary writers give many hints of the mercenary motives which frequently lay behind the teaching of philosophy, and they show that countless “sophists” and “rhetors” all over the Empire were doing a great deal to pervert or corrupt the philosophic ideal.

The Epistles of Seneca tell much about the uses and

¹ De Sto. rep. 1033 B.

abuses of philosophic teaching in his day. "In choosing a teacher," he says,¹ "we may go to the ancients, who have unlimited leisure to teach us (*qui vacant*). If we choose one of our own contemporaries, let it be not a glib talker, but a man who teaches by his life rather than by his words. Let philosophy be worshipped in silence (*adoretur*). There is no doubt that philosophy has suffered a loss since she exposed her charms for sale, but she may still be viewed in her sanctuary if her exhibitor is a priest and not a pedlar." Elsewhere² he warns us that philosophy is no trick to catch the public eye : *non in verbis sed in rebus est* ; and he deplores the verbal quibblings which many philosophers make their sole title to fame. He quotes an example³ : *Mus syllaba est ; mus autem caseum rodit ; syllaba ergo caseum rodit*. Philosophy, says Seneca, stands on a higher plane than this, for her ultimate promise is that man shall be made equal to God.

Plutarch was not altogether guiltless of the rhetorical style of his day ; but, in general, when he writes on philosophy, his tone indicates heartfelt conviction. There is, however, one treatise which combines in an unfortunate way the tricks of the rhetor and the fervour of the true philosopher. This is called *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*. It will be best to summarise and dismiss this before proceeding to the works in which Plutarch's expression of his views is simple and undisguised.

"Philosophy informs everything that it touches with movement and activity and life. It imparts motive-power and a deliberate leaning towards the most profitable things of life. It creates a purposeful love of beauty, resolution, and loftiness combined with

¹ Ep. lii.² Ep. xvi.³ Ep. xlviii.

gentleness and steadfastness, which form the basis of the attraction which statesmen feel for eminent philosophers.”¹

If philosophic Reason (Plutarch continues) gains a hold on a private individual, who finds satisfaction in a quiet life and circumscribes his existence by the demands of the body, it cannot influence other men, but withers and dies along with the individual, the attainment of his particular peace and quiet being the only thing to its credit. But if it is present in a ruler, a man of political interest and active character, it makes him as noble as is humanly possible, and does good to many men through the medium of one. Thus Anaxagoras conferred great benefit on mankind through his friendship with Pericles, Plato through his association with Dionysius, and the Pythagoreans through their dealings with the leading men of Italy.

There are two kinds of λόγοι—the inner conception, or thought, and the outward utterance, which is instrumental to the first. The end of both is friendship—of the former, friendship with oneself, and of the latter, friendship with one’s fellow-men. The former, by means of philosophy, makes a man’s virtue harmonious with himself, beyond reproach in his own eyes, and full of inward peace and contentment. His Passions are not disobedient to his Reason, neither do his reasoning faculties thwart one another.

Pindar boasted that the outward expression of philosophic thought was οὐ φιλοκερδῆ,² and it is deplorable that in these days it should be used for mercenary ends. Some so-called philosophers use philosophy only in order to obtain fame and popularity. This is an inversion of the proper system, for one

¹ 776 C.

² Isthm. 2. 10.

cannot deny that popularity is a great asset to a teacher of philosophy. It is neither easy nor pleasant to benefit those who do not want to be benefited. Thus the philosopher must cultivate a spirit of friendship, and this friendship must be no narrow relation, but it must comprehend as many of mankind as possible. It is nobler and more pleasant to confer than to receive a benefit. The more people that are affected by a good work, the better. "How, then, do you suppose that a philosopher will feel about Reason when he sees it grasped by a statesman and leader, who will by it become a general blessing in his administration and legislation, and in his punishment of the wicked and his elevation of the worthy and good?"¹

This piece is only a fragment. It reads as if it were dedicated, if not to a Roman emperor, at least to a high official in the Imperial circle. The rhetorical tone is unmistakable. The genuine philosophy of the age did not so readily abandon its individualistic tendency, and the unusual departure here seems forced. It was well to refute, as is here done, the Cynic notion that the philosopher who frequents the halls of the great is necessarily performing the meanest kind of servile duty; but Plutarch certainly over-estimates the altruism of Anaxagoras, who did little more for Athens than find for himself a congenial spirit in Pericles, of Plato, who was intent on experiments of greater interest to himself than of practical profit to others, and of Pythagoras, whose social relations were determined by the simplest conditions of topography.

It is, of course, impossible to question Plutarch's interest in his fellow-men. The analysis of a number of his essays which particularly reveal it has not

¹ 779 A-B.

fallen within the scope of our subject. In the *Præcepta coniugalia* he lays down as the ideal basis of marriage that moral equality between man and wife which springs from mutual devotion; in the *De fraterno amore* he says that the most precious gift which parents can give their child is a brother, and quotes his own brother Lamprias as proving this in his own life; in the *De multitudine amicorum* he states that affection distributed among a great number of friends is liable to be superficial and worthless; the *De adulatore et amico* is written round the truth that the value of a friend lies in his heart; in the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* he points out that enemies are as necessary and desirable a feature of life as friends, since enemies cure us of our faults; thus the bad temper of Xantippe was an excellent training in patience for Socrates; the *De republica gerenda* has a still wider outlook; and many essays reveal Plutarch's interest in the ordinary round of affairs in a small Greek township, and describe the personal traits, some lovable and some reprehensible, which characterised its citizens.

*Nihil humani a se alienum putat.*¹ All these essays come under the broad heading of "philosophy," but the subject does not reach its highest level here.

Plutarch has frequently been belittled on the ground that his philosophy has no originality. There is, however, a distinct independence, if not originality, about his eclecticism. The alleged intellectual poverty of the later Greeks has become a by-word among some scholars. Plutarch does much to disprove the notion. It is difficult for modern critics to realise the comparative vagueness and indefiniteness of the ancient philosophic systems, and the immaturity of

¹ Neatly quoted by Professor Hartman with reference to Plutarch.

method which necessarily marked Greek thought even in its richest development. The greatest Greek thinkers fall unconsciously into inconsistencies and confusions which ordinary men in our own day as unconsciously avoid. We have been helped by the elaboration of logic, the growth of natural science, and the almost excessive development of criticism. When even Cicero, a man of no mean powers, could do little for earlier philosophies but reduce them to ἀπόγραφα and, to some extent, improve their logical order, Plutarch seems remarkable for a strength and ingenuity of philosophic criticism far in advance of his time.

He realised exactly what he wanted from philosophy. He was prepared to approve or condemn all previous philosophers according to the way in which they had framed their lives by the ideals which they professed. He hated inconsistencies, and devoted the greater part of two long essays, *De communibus notitiis* and *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*, to holding up to ridicule the inconsistencies of the Stoic philosophy. He despised the artificial standard of universal "indifference" upheld by the Stoics. He wanted to allow room for individual thought and judgment, and he had sufficient power of valuation to insist that everything in life should be estimated according to its intrinsic worth. He despised, too, the lack of enterprise indicated by an excessive attachment to the Sceptic "suspension of judgment."¹ Most of all he scorned the Epicureans' over-estimate of sensual gratification, their degradation of intellect, and their neglect of the things that most make life worth living, of self-respect in the present and of hope in the future. He wanted to deal with facts, and he was prepared to face them boldly. He

¹ Adv. Col., ch. 26.

lived in an age which had inherited and acquired a great number of facts, and it was not the spirit of that age to be daunted by number. We have already seen how Practical Reason was to work upon these facts and assign them to their proper place in the universe. Plato had shown that no part of truth is quite isolated, but that all contribute in some way to the total of knowledge. Thus Practical Reason, while gaining strength by constant practice of itself as a faculty, begins to conceive of a vast design of which the culmination is not yet reached. This culmination will justify the whole. That all this intellectual effort should end in a waste was to Plutarch unthinkable. At this critical point of the development of his thought Plato supplied to him what was needed.

Plato, in his valuation of the important things of life, took his final stand on passion for truth. The definition of the truth which he intended took him far into the philosophy of ideas, of "the things that are," as contrasted with the transient phenomena that form our present world; eventually it brought him to the highest idea of all, the eternal reality of Wisdom and Beauty and Love. To one who is absorbed in "the vision of all time and all existence," human life seems but a little thing. The passions of the body, and physical and intellectual contact with the world of sense, become as nothing compared with the supreme exercise of intellect in connection with the eternal and the divine. "The man whose mind is really set upon the things that are, has not leisure to look down upon the concerns of men, and to fight with them, and to fill himself with envy and bitterness. That which he sees and gazes upon is set fast and ever the same, it neither does nor suffers wrong, but is all reasonable

and in order. This he imitates, and as far as possible becomes like it, for it surely cannot be that a man can live in fellowship with what he admires without imitating it. So then the philosopher, living in fellowship with what is divine and orderly, grows himself orderly and divine as far as man is able.”¹

This passage shows the effect of philosophy on a man's attitude towards this present life. Elsewhere Plato looks further. Early in the *Phædo*² he makes Socrates speak these words: “Now I wish to render you my account of how it seems reasonable to me that a man who has truly spent his life in philosophy should be of good cheer when he is about to die, and that he should cherish a hope of winning the greatest good yonder when he is dead. . . . For all who apply themselves aright to philosophy do of themselves, unknown to the rest of men, follow nothing else except dying and death.” The *Phædo* and the *Symposium* are both intended to develop this thought fully. “Wherefore the lover of wisdom will depart from life with joy, for he will have an assured conviction that only after death will he meet with wisdom in her purity. Would it not be the height of unreason if such a man feared death?” There is nothing gloomy or morbid in Plato's conception of this life as a rehearsal of death (μελέτη θανάτου).³ It adds to, rather than detracts from, the joy of living. The search for wisdom is the highest music for mortal men (φιλοσοφία μεγίστη μουσική),⁴ yet this is but the prelude to the song of immortality. Here is the cardinal doctrine of Plato's philosophy of education.

There is something rather monastic and exclusive

¹ *Republic*, 500 B-C.

² 63 E.

³ 81 A.

⁴ *Phædo*, 61 A.

in Plato's point of view. Plutarch modified it to some extent, for the progress of thought accomplished much in the period intervening between the two philosophers. Aristotle initiated a reaction of great moment when he pointed out the simple truth that men are men and not ideal philosophers. He drew away from mere contemplation, and laid greater emphasis on action ; but his insistence on the divinity of the intellect is nevertheless remarkable. The Stoics reduced philosophy to the level of a practical pursuit. They upheld an empirical theory of knowledge and the responsibility of the individual. They were concerned with the present rather than with the future, and were content to believe that when the final conflagration reabsorbed the world into the God whence it originated, all would be well with them. The Epicureans were so far from finding hope in death that they found it necessary to exercise much thought and ingenuity in robbing it of its terrors. When an Epicurean could accept undismayed the prospect of his ultimate annihilation, and say with Lucretius,

Nil igitur mors est nobis, neque pertinet bilum,

he had wrung from his philosophy the highest blessing it could give him.

It is not surprising that in the main Plutarch fell back on Plato. Plato had found more satisfaction in his own philosophy than had anybody since his day, and the "argument and battle on behalf of the gods,"¹ which he carried on "with an enthusiasm beyond the strength of his years," made a permanent appeal.

In Plutarch's mind one aspect of man's communion with God was the popularly accepted process of divina-

¹ τὸν περὶ θεῶν ἀγῶνα καὶ λόγον (De procr. an. 1013 E).

tion. This was a concession to the view of ordinary people. Whether he hoped thus to make the way easier for them towards the pure intellectualism of Plato or Aristotle, is doubtful. Plutarch does not deny an intellectual quality to divination. He allows that any form of revelation operates through matter, but as God is the ultimate cause of the operation, the phenomenon may be regarded in the light of both piety and common sense. "We do not separate divination either from God or from Reason, for we allow it for its subject the soul of man, and for its instrument an exhalation, material and yet divine."¹ But this is a primitive stage of approach to the thought of the Divine. The body is here allowed a prominence which it owes only to popular belief, and Reason is nearly a passive factor.

A higher stage is seen in the wonderful story of Thespesius of Soli, at the end of the essay *De sera numinis vindicta*. "You are not yet in the number of the dead," says a spirit to Thespesius, "but by a special dispensation of the gods you have come here in your intellectual faculty only. The rest of your soul you have left behind, like an anchor, in your body." Of course this is a myth, but there are clearly defined limits beyond which the ancient writers of myth do not tax our understanding. In this passage the fact remains that Thespesius, in this state of intellectual detachment, is allowed an insight into what we have already seen to be the final aim of intellectual activity, namely, the character of the hereafter. The object of this myth is to describe the terrible future that awaits the wicked after death. "Adrasteia, the daughter of Zeus and Necessity, is appointed in the highest place

¹ De def. orac. 436 F.

of all, to punish every kind of iniquity, and there is none of the wicked so great or so small that he can by force or cunning escape his due.”¹ This is different from those rare glimpses of the divine beauty which Reason, “the pilot of the soul,” is said to attain in Plato’s *Phædrus*.² But the darkness of Plutarch’s picture is intended to illustrate the particular subject of his whole treatise, and the question of divine punishment could hardly be expected to yield a vision of joy. In any case, the once profligate Thespesius returned to earth a changed man. “There never was in that age a man more just in his dealings with his fellows, more devout in his worship of the gods, more inexorable to his enemies or more staunch to his friends.”³

φιλοσοφίας τέλος θεολογία. The question resolves itself finally into this, and perhaps Plutarch’s noblest exposition of it is to be found at the end of the treatise *De E apud Delphos*. This work is in form a discussion of the meaning of the letter E inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Various interpretations are offered. It may have an astronomical significance, referring to the sun, the second of the planets, as *e* is the second of the vowels. It may denote a prayer to God, standing for a wish. It may, being the fifth letter of the alphabet, have a relation to mathematics : and so on. At last Ammonius, Plutarch’s old teacher at Athens, pronounces the final opinion. “My belief is that this word is a perfect mode of address and greeting to God, which at the very moment of utterance brings the speaker into realisation of his power. . . . We say to him, εἶ, ‘Thou art,’ thus attributing to him alone this true, unfeigned, and inherent claim to Being. We ourselves have no untrammelled share in Being

¹ 564 E.² *Phædrus*, 247 C.³ 563 D.

but every mortal nature, hovering in the interim between birth and destruction, presents a dim and uncertain appearance and suggestion of itself. And if you bring your whole thought to bear in your desire to grasp it, then (just as a man who tries to catch water in his hand and squeeze it, in spite of its fluid quality, finds that it slips away and eludes his grasp) Reason, pursuing a clear glimpse of phenomena which are subject to Passion and Change, is at a loss, coming up here against generation and there against corruption, and cannot find anything stable or really existent to seize. It is impossible to step twice into the same river, as Heracleitus said, or twice to find any mortal substance in the same state. . . . So yesterday died in to-day, and to-day dies in to-morrow. No one remains, and no one exists, but many come into existence. . . . For if we remain the same how do we find delight in different things now from what pleased us before? Why have our love and hate, praise and blame, changed? Why have our reasonings and passions changed and forgotten their old form and shape and purpose?" (It is evident that the λόγος here referred to is Practical Reason only, which inevitably fluctuates according to the changes of the material world upon which it works. This is proved a sentence or two later.) "Sensation, by its ignorance of Being, is deceived into thinking that phenomena exist." (For sensation is the channel to πάθος and to λόγος πρακτικός. The whole of our composition is thus subject to change and decay except that part not yet enumerated, λόγος θεωρητικός. Ammonius proceeds :) "What, then, is it that really exists? That which is eternal, unbegotten, and incorruptible. . . . God, we must say, exists, and exists apart from time

and in eternity, which has no relation to movement or time or change, which knows no first or last, things future or things to come, no older nor younger ; but, being one, embraces the whole of itself in a single present. . . . Now as for those who think Apollo and the Sun to be the same, they deserve praise and affection for their happy expression of the case, since out of all the things that they know of and long for they set their idea of God in that which they reverence the most. And now, as if they were dreaming the fairest possible dream about God, let us wake them up and urge them to proceed higher, and to contemplate his reality and essence. . . . The sentence ‘ Know thyself ’ seems in one way antagonistic to, and in another harmonious with, this saying ‘ Thou art.’ For the latter is pronounced in awe and veneration of God as being eternal, and the other is a remembrance to mortal man of his nature and weakness.”

This is the close of the essay. Plato would hardly have ended such an essay on this note of human infirmity. Plotinus was equally remote from it. He, indeed, held that in the attainment of knowledge man must first go through the process of learning by experience. Knowledge and virtue, of some kind, could, in his view, exist without philosophy, and it was only by starting from these that the height of theoretic knowledge could be reached. “ The Vision of the One ” dawned only on the purified intellectual soul. The great stumbling-block of idealist philosophy is language. The mystic vision is ineffable. First, the body has to be eliminated ; then sense-perceptions, appetites, and emotions ; even then, there remains intellect. Thus far the teaching of Plotinus is foreshadowed by the doctrine of Plutarch, especially the

passage from *De E* quoted above. But Plotinus, inarticulate and mystical, tried to go further ; the phrase *ἄφελε πάντα* was the best he could devise for expressing the complete absorption of the human into the divine.

Plutarch, the so-called " first of the Neo-Platonists," standing chronologically between Plato and Plotinus, fell short of the heights of both. " The Greeks seek after wisdom," wrote St. Paul of this period. The same writer showed what Plutarch divined for himself in his own way : " We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." To Plato, Plutarch, and St. Paul, death was the gate to perfect knowledge. Plutarch could not let Plato's idea of a *μελέτη θανάτου* dominate his life ; but in the midst of the busy world in which he played so full a part, he felt that in death, and not till then, he would find the consummation of his existence. He could not say with St. Paul, " I die daily," but he would have understood the fervour with which the apostle exclaimed, " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! " Plato and St. Paul were both greater men than Plutarch, but he had something of their religious rapture. He was sometimes a little too much obsessed with the number and the strength of the phenomena of this passing life. He was not a perfect Platonist. Yet he did ultimately divine the vision which made all living and striving and learning worth while. " Men's souls, being encompassed here with bodies and Passions, have no communication with God, except as far as they can reach in thought alone, by means of philosophy, as by a kind of obscure dream. But when they are loosed from the body, and removed into the immaterial, invisible, serene, and pure region,

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this God is then their leader and king ; there, as it were, they cling to him wholly, and behold without weariness or surfeit that beauty which cannot be expressed or uttered by men.”¹

In truth “ the Greeks sought after wisdom.”

¹ *De Iside*, 382 F – 383 A.

CHAPTER X

THE END IN VIEW

WE have reviewed the component parts of the educational system devised by Plutarch (if it is not unreasonable thus to correlate his scattered ideas into a more or less complete whole). The review has taken us somewhat ahead and has shown us, perhaps "in a glass darkly," but without any real doubt, what is its ultimate aim. Meanwhile, what practical good is it to do in this life? What kind of man is it to produce? What is his function in this world, and how is he to justify the fact of his education?

We come now to our climax, and if it is of the nature of an anti-climax Plutarch was neither the first nor the last philosopher to fail to reach a climax of the highest order. We shall be liable to meet with disappointment, just as we are likely to derive encouragement and inspiration, till the last word of Plutarch has been discovered and read.

It is not difficult to anticipate that the climax is in some way connected with citizenship and with politics. From the earliest days in Greece, the city was a moral organism. It had its own set character, which was founded more on morals than on law. The Funeral Speech of Pericles shows how deeply conscious the citizens were of their city's moral individuality. So completely interwoven were politics

and ethics, that Plato in the *Republic* wrote a single treatise dealing, to his mind exhaustively, with both in their mutual relation. Even Aristotle, when he wrote two books entitled *Ethics* and *Politics* respectively, did not really differentiate between the two.¹ In the former he regarded morality in connection with psychology, as a state of the soul of the individual. In the latter he wrote of it in connection with its environment, as the creation of a political authority, and a field of action for the community at large. It is true that the Cynics and some Stoics held aloof from politics because they felt it was incompatible with the best morality to take a part in the political life as it then existed.² Thus Chrysippus, when asked the reason for his abstention from politics, replied: Διότι εἰ μὲν πονηρά τις πολιτεύεται, τοῖς θεοῖς ἀπαρέσει, εἰ δὲ χρηστά, τοῖς πολίταις.³ It was a painful dilemma, but his answer was no solution to the problem. The Epicureans, too, lacked interest in political matters, for they held that they were not worth while, since the whole of life was to end in annihilation. Some fragments of New Comedy show the philosophers held up to ridicule for their aloofness from the State, but such an attitude on their part was the exception rather than the rule in Greece. Plutarch follows the rule.

He cannot have been ignorant of Plato's saying that evil will never cease from the world until philosophers become kings or kings philosophers. He does not actually quote it, but the extant fragment of his essay *Ad principem ineruditum* endorses Plato's view. Many

¹ ἡθικὴ ἐπιστήμη πολιτικὴ τις οὔσα.

² Cf. M. Aurelius, iii. 295-7.

³ Stobæus, Flor., xlv. 29.

monarchs, he says, appear to believe that a repellent demeanour and majestic aloofness form the most necessary qualifications for kingship. But a ruler ought to lay the foundations of his rule within himself, by directing his soul aright and establishing in it its proper tone. Then he can mould his subjects to his own pattern.¹ Who is to rule the ruler? Surely Law, which Pindar calls "the king of all mortals and immortals"²; it is not a law written in books or engraven on tablets of wood, but Reason, which is vital in the man himself. Justice is the end of law, law is the work of the ruler, and the ruler is the image of God who orders all things. The ruler has no need of a Pheidias or a Polyclitus to make his portrait; he fashions himself through virtue to a likeness to God, and the image that he produces is the fairest of all, and the most worthy of the divine counterpart. For as God has established in the heavens the Sun, most fair to see, and the Moon as images of Himself, so a ruler is His resplendent image in a State, if he accepts as the attributes of God Reason and Thought, not the sceptre or thunderbolt or trident, which popular imagination imputes to him.³ "God has set up in states the light of justice and reason concerning Himself, as it were an image, which the elect and wise attain by philosophy, moulding themselves according to this, the fairest of all things. This attitude of mind can be produced only by Reason, which is the fruit of philosophy."⁴

¹ 780 B.

² The Pindaric νόμος is interpreted by some commentators differently.

³ 780 E-F.

⁴ 781 F-782 A.

Great power is apt to afford scope for riot among the Passions. This must be repressed and restrained by the weight of Reason.¹

Plutarch then begins to discuss the conspicuousness of the faults of public men :

The fierce white light that beats upon a throne
And blackens every blot,

as a much later poet has written. But his argument breaks off in the middle, and the rest of the essay is lost. Enough, however, is extant to be of value. In no sphere of life are the moderation of Passion and the cultivation of Reason, the lessons which form the foundation of Plutarch's teaching, so completely vindicated as in the career of the ruler and the statesman ; but it is impossible not to feel that the portrait in his pages is idealised.

The essay *An seni sit gerenda republica* is rather long, but need not concern us in detail. Plutarch quotes the saying of Simonides, πόλις ἄνδρα διδάσκει,² and amplifies the idea of the previous treatise, showing that public service is not only the noblest fruit but the widest and most permanent form of education. "No one ever knew a bee become a drone through age" ; similarly, there is no reason why a man, when the active and immortal parts of his soul are certainly stronger than those concerned with the Passions and the body, should withdraw from political life on account of the advent of old age.³ Indeed, according to the arguments of Plutarch's psychology, he should all the more fully take part in them. "An old man who makes speeches and takes part in public affairs, and gains honour, is a venerable sight, but he who lies all day on

¹ 782 E.

² 784 B.

³ 783 E.

his couch or sits in a corner of his porch talking nonsense or blowing his nose, is simply contemptible. . . . For a habit of thought is not preserved if men let themselves become lax. It gradually diminishes and degenerates from want of use, and always needs some practice of itself to keep the reasoning and practical faculties alert and bright. 'It shines by use, like goodly brass.'"¹

The inference is that the growing prominence of Reason in old age brings a man nearer to the divinity which awaits him after death, and that public service is the best means of assisting Reason to this end. This is, however, nowhere stated, and there is no evidence that Plutarch pursued this train of thought to its conclusion.

In the *Præcepta reipublicæ gerendæ*, which, from its title, might be expected to sum up Plutarch's political philosophy, the thought which in the previous essays has hovered so near to idealism drops again to a lower plane.

Plutarch had a friend named Menemachus, a young nobleman who was proposing to follow the tradition of his family and adopt a political career. He was, however, still lacking in that knowledge of the past and experience of the present which combine to make the good statesman. In order, therefore, to remedy these deficiencies, Plutarch advises him in the following terms :—

"The only proper and secure foundation for statesmanship is an outlook based on judgment and reason, not on a vague desire for glory nor on a wish to quarrel nor on sheer lack of anything else to do."² Our motive should not be mercenary, like that of

¹ 788 A-B.

² 798 C.

Stratocles and Dromoclides,¹ nor emotional, like that of C. Gracchus. Our adoption of a political career must be preceded by long and careful thought. Our attitude towards life must be marked by moderation (Plutarch's favourite word—*μετρίως*)² and our sole aim must be the beautiful (*τὸ καλόν*).

Our own character being thus defined, Plutarch next describes our relation with those with whom our office brings us into contact. We must have sufficient sympathy and penetration to understand how to deal with other people's moods and feelings (*χρησθαι πρὸς ἕκαστον, οἷς ἀλώσιμός ἐστιν*).³ Lack of intuition is as fatal in public as in private relationships. We must use this understanding to bring our subjects, without arousing any resentment on their part, to something higher than they know already. People's confidence in us depends greatly on our own personality. It is possible, however, to supplement force of character by charm of language. Here follows a short section in praise of rhetoric, which is called "not the creator but the colleague of persuasion." Its limits as well as its possibilities are carefully defined. We are told that it should be neither florid nor abstruse, but unaffected, sincere, and delivered with a kindly consideration for others. Its charm should aim at *τὸ καλόν*, and its influence should rest on dignity of expression and a winning originality of thought.³ Historical examples and literary turns do not come amiss in rhetoric. Jest and raillery may be allowed, provided that they are compatible with dignity and good feeling.

Then follows advice on the choice and treatment of

¹ Cf. Plut. *Demetrius*, c. 34, for the proposal to give Dromoclides the Piræus and Munychia.

² 800 A.

³ 803 A.

friends and counsellors, and the proper attitude towards enemies. The great principle is laid down that public feeling should always prevail over private emotion.

We are told to select our work according to our qualifications. It is an unpleasant reproach to be told that we went on an embassy although we knew we had no power of pleading, or that we accepted a treasurer-ship knowing that we had no skill in keeping accounts. Here is *γνώθι σεαυτόν* again.

Much sensible advice is given on the subject of diplomacy, on tact towards Roman officials, and on the best way of dealing with both superior and inferior magistrates. The public man should be free from ignoble ambition, but ready to accept well-earned honours from a grateful people, for the goodwill of a people is an armour¹ against the forces of envy and wickedness. "That is of all loves the strongest and divinest which a state or a people feel towards an individual for his goodness."

Bee-keepers² know that the surest sign of a healthy hive is perpetual humming and bustle. "But the man whom God has made keeper of an intelligent city³ realises that the happiness of a people depends chiefly on their peace and quiet." A good ruler takes care that no strife arises, and regards this as the greatest and most honourable feature of his statesmanship. "Observe that of the greatest blessings a State can have—peace, freedom, plenty, population, and concord—people nowadays have no need of a statesman

¹ ὄπλον (821 C).

² Bees have been a fruitful source of simile to political philosophers from Plato to Mandeville.

³ τοῦ λογικοῦ καὶ πολιτικοῦ σμήνους (823 F).

to procure them peace. . . . As for liberty, they have as much as the Emperors think fit to give them, and perhaps more would not be wise.”¹ We may pray that the earth may bring forth fruits and men in plenty; that is the concern of the gods. And thus the chief duty which devolves on the statesman is the creation and preservation of peace and friendship among those whom he rules.

This is a creditable composition. It is marked by much common sense and by a frankness about one's private diplomatic handling of other people before which British reserve stands rather shocked. The idealism of the piece is not on Plutarch's highest level. It begins by laying the foundation of statesmanship in the exercise of Reason; but its final demand is for a serenity such as he urges in parts of his essay *De tranquillitate animi*, where the main concern is the moderation of the Passions, and the thoughts of the reader are directed to the things of earth rather than to the things of heaven. The tone of this essay is genuine. It is not a rhetorical display, but practical counsel for a particular case. Throughout it breathes the perfect content which the provinces felt with the rule of Rome in the first and second centuries A.D. Plutarch's sentiments coincide exactly with those expressed by Dio Chrysostom and other Greek rhetoricians. The Roman proconsul is accepted as part of the normal order, and no reason is suggested why his presence should be the cause of any unpleasantness or inconvenience to the provincials. The tone of the treatise, like that of Plutarch's historical writings, is municipal. Plutarch represents municipality at its best, for there are some passages even in this essay (for instance, that² in

¹ 824 C.

² 822 C.

which his proposed statesman is said to put down gladiatorial shows and other inhuman exhibitions) which reveal a mercifulness of disposition only too rare in the literature of that age.

Municipality was much more important to the ancient politician than is sometimes realised. The ancients thought in terms of cities more readily than in terms of nations. The Roman Empire was essentially a vast confederation of municipal cities, which as political entities carried more weight than the provinces themselves. Much of Rome's own prestige and popularity was based on her rôle of predominant partner in this vast alliance, and her maintenance of this character enhanced the dignity of municipallife throughout the Empire. She always tolerated local diversities of constitution and temperament to a remarkable degree, and in fostering the municipal spirit in the cities which came under her dominion she left to her subjects unimpaired an outlet for public feeling when other forms of politics had for most men ceased to exist. Plutarch's attitude is thus explained, if not defended. No political philosophy can be detached from its environment. Most of the great works of political thinkers have been addressed with a practical object to contemporary conditions. The speculations of Plato and Aristotle dealt with the city-state with which they were contemporary. Their work was a study, not of history or of Utopianism, but of something in which they lived and moved and laboured. The size of a city allowed a man to realise his part in it, and to understand that his activities possessed an intrinsic value. Speculations about it were definite and comprehensive.

With the phenomenal expansion of Alexander's

Empire men began to think in larger terms, and in some ways political philosophy lost in clearness where it gained in breadth. The kingdoms of the Diadochoi inspired the Stoics and Cynics with their theories of a world-state. In this society, at least according to the Stoic view, all distinctions of race and class were to be subordinated to a sense of universal kinship and brotherhood. Historical pride and nationalist prejudice were to disappear, and the new construction was to be based on universal good-will¹ and individual liberty. The ideal of education was the production of the best possible citizen of this cosmopolis. The early Stoics must have had rude shocks as they witnessed the vicissitudes of the successors of Alexander, but their ideas persisted. Then came a troubled period when most men were too much preoccupied with acting politics to be able to theorise about them. Polybius and Cicero are the only two political thinkers of note who appear under the Roman Republic. It was long before the leisured philosophers of the Empire came into a heritage of ideas which were ready to serve the conditions of their time.

Plutarch's writings on the ideal statesman seem sometimes vague and ineffectual, sometimes limited in their outlook. Yet there were moments, as we have seen, when he was still sufficiently a Platonist to desire to educate an ideal statesman. In his day, the only such pupil whom the philosopher could hope to educate with practical effect was the Emperor himself. Seneca's unhappy experiences as tutor to Nero might well deter others from similar ventures with later monarchs. In any case, it is impossible to give credence to the

¹ *Salva autem esse societas nisi custodia et amore partium non potest* (Seneca, Dial., iv. 31. 7).

theory that Plutarch acted as tutor to Trajan. Paradoxical as it may seem, in the age which might have offered the best opportunities for the development of fellowship and the realisation of personal influence, man was thrown back, quite as much as ever before, on to himself. His only political relations were with his fellow-citizens and with his Roman governor. The latter might be near at hand or far away; in either case, intercourse between him and the provincials was confined to insignificant details, and mattered little to either side. The Greeks were apt to shelve on to the Roman consul the responsibility of settling even the minutest questions. Plutarch blames them for this. He liked to think that statesmanship might still exist, and that it was a career worthy of the greatest and noblest of mankind. It was a dream only. For the majority of men under the Empire statesmanship was dead; and Plutarch, when he supervised the measuring of tiles and the unloading of clay and stones in his own little city, and said to himself that he performed this service, not for his own profit, but for that of his country,¹ must then at least have realised the littleness of even his greatest political responsibilities.

The tranquillity of this existence cannot be denied. Peace was a reality won by the sword of Cæsar and strengthened by the practical wisdom of Augustus, not merely something dreamed of in the philosopher's hall or garden. There was no need to do as Plato had suggested, and to try to secure peace by the institution of a specialised class of governors, nor, as Aristotle had done, to conceive of an abstract dispassionate law as the true sovereign of a state. Peace already prevailed, and the only problem was how to preserve it,

¹ Rp. ger., ch. 15.

without forcing war and strife, or inviting stagnation. Plutarch believed that if each man were at peace with himself he would necessarily be at peace with other men. He fell back on the individual. *γνώθι σεαυτόν* and *μηδὲν ἄγαν* seemed to be the two best precepts that the past or present could offer him, and he made these the basis of his teaching. It was not an exciting doctrine ; indeed, it was of its very essence not to create a sensation or a stir. Yet it was a sound contribution to that *pax Romana* which had originally made it possible. Now that there was no need for a man to give up the whole, or even part, of his life to military training, philosophy might reach more people than Plato or Aristotle had ever dreamed, and the world would be all the richer.

The selection of pupils, which had been a question of such moment to those two philosophers, troubled Plutarch but little. All the leisured half of the world, irrespective of intellectual endowment or of temperament, naturally underwent the common process of education. The other half, equally naturally, did not ; from the point of view of the educator, it did not exist. Plutarch accepted this without question. It was not a democratic ideal, but to everyone concerned it seemed liberal and pleasant. The privileged class did not, as a rule, trouble to understand why they were being educated. Few felt the call of social service in any form, but some means had to be devised of filling men's leisured lives with a dignified, attractive, and intelligent interest. The very few who considered the end in view were unable to arrive at a satisfying conclusion. Quintilian set his ideals in the forum and other such spheres of personal influence, but the times forbade a practical interpretation of his teaching. Plutarch

faced the situation more frankly. Having made certain sensible suggestions for the relations between a Greek citizen and a Roman consul, just as he did for those between master and slave, and husband and wife, he abandoned the problem of social values and concentrated his teaching on the needs of the individual. He may have been narrow and egotistical, but he was certainly single-hearted and sincere.

CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY

PLUTARCH'S theory of education is limited in its address to the leisured class. There was an old proverb, οὐ σχολή δούλοις,¹ and the later history of the meaning of σχολή shows how nearly σχολή and παιδεία were convertible terms.² Clearly his system is meant to apply chiefly to men, though he sometimes admits³ his belief that women should share in the advantages of education up to a certain point. Stobæus (18-31) assigns certain quotations to Plutarch's essay *Mulieres erudiendas esse*. His reference is certainly erroneous, and it is unfortunate that so interesting a work is lost in its entirety.

Plutarch's theory is concerned mainly with the young adult. Although his main principles cover every stage of man's development, the period which usually coincides with the University course is the subject of his most detailed interest. Since education at that period is at once the coping-stone of all the teaching which has preceded it, and the foundation of the vast and undefined training undergone in later years through contact with the world, his theory is a fruitful study to those in charge of all stages.

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 7.15.2.

² The Latin word *ludus* is another instance of this double meaning.

³ e.g. *Præc. Coniug.* 145 C.

He conceives of education as a process which continues from the moment of a man's birth to that of his death. In his view, a man never stands still in his progress towards his end. Moreover, education is concerned not only with every stage of man's existence, but with every part of his being ; with his body ; with the Passions, those affections of the soul which originate through the body, and bind a man during life to the things of earth ; and with his soul, the fragment of the Divine in him, which is destined to immortality, and is the recipient of all the knowledge which he can carry with him into the hereafter. This long view is very important. Plutarch stresses, too, the pupil's own responsibility and the necessity of individual effort. All the help that a man receives, both from his environment and from direct teaching, is intended to increase his sense of responsibility and his ability to look far ahead ; to make him feel, in fact, that education can never reach its consummation until the soul, strong and unafraid in its independent travel, comes to its own after death.

Within certain limits imposed by the educational conventions of the age, Plutarch's whole curriculum, for juvenile, adolescent, and adult, is directed towards this end. Its dominating note is moderation. By properly moderated diet and exercise, the body is to be brought to that state of health and strength which best promotes the sane and suitable activities of the soul. Emotions are to be carefully regulated. They must be readily obedient to the commands of the higher nature, but they must not be repressed to a condition of asceticism, which would impair the vigour of the intellectual faculties. Introspection is commended. Good manners and outward appearances

are said to constitute evidence of good morals and inward virtue.

The vigour of the intellect is said to depend much on the exercise of independent thought, perseverance, concentration, and attention to detail. In acquiring knowledge of the material world, the soul is trained and strengthened for speculations on the deepest mysteries of the universe—speculations which will become knowledge when the soul is freed from its material setting. Among particular subjects, the chief value of literature lies in its moral and, to a certain extent, its patriotic outlook. Its artistic worth is regarded as negligible. It provides a vast field of erudition and an inexhaustible source of conversation, though this is trifling compared with its importance as a moral force.

The function of history is almost the same. It is chiefly a question of morals. It conveys no lessons of practical politics, economics, or strategy, nor any large constructive view of progress.

The study of the natural sciences comprises chiefly the acquisition of much second-hand knowledge of botany, natural history, geography, and medicine. Within limits, it includes a first-hand observation of nature, but this is superficial and unsystematic. Ultimately, however, science is intended to be a basis for philosophy and theology.

Similarly, mathematics is chiefly a foundation for astronomy, and thus it prepares the way for philosophy.

Music, again, has two values, philosophic and social. Its social function includes religious observance, for music is a means of giving thanks to the gods. Musical education must promote an understanding of harmony, rhythm, and the sense of words, and it demands a

faculty for comprehending these three together as a complex expression. It has a definite moral bias. It also lies at the very root of philosophy, since through it the soul becomes a melody, fit to be incorporated into the eternal melody of the universe.

Finally, philosophy is the consummation of all these studies. It gathers into itself all moral teaching. It also essays to penetrate, as far as mortal intelligence may, into the mysteries of the Universe and the soul of man, of birth and death, of our lost past and our hidden future. *φιλοσοφίας τέλος θεολογία*. It prepares man for the revelation of perfect knowledge in the world to come.

The realist and idealist are strangely blended in this scheme of study.

Plutarch has in practice abandoned the Platonic pursuit of dialectic, though he was not blind to its theoretical value, for he wrote a very pleasing appreciation of the Socratic method in the *Quæstiones Platonicae*.¹ It was not an age for original philosophic research. Earlier thinkers had asked countless questions and suggested countless answers. Plutarch's contemporaries satisfied themselves with the process of selection from the great amount of material at hand. Dialectic was replaced by eclecticism.

Rhetoric, too, is neglected, except as a special training for the statesman. Yet Plutarch himself, following the fashion of his age, was a competent rhetorician, and several of his treatises are frank rhetorical exercises. He certainly valued literary elegance as a social distinction, but he seems to have stood almost alone among his contemporaries in realising that rhetoric had little intrinsic worth.

To go further in enumerating the subjects which Plutarch has not included in his educational scheme would be idle. He felt the importance of constructive thought in every department of life, and we must follow him here. Already he has given us much, and some of the points deserve elaboration.

With his lessons of constructiveness and idealism we must keep the sense of his serenity and calm :

“Peace is profitable in most things, including the acquisition of knowledge and the practice of wisdom. I do not refer to mercenary or lucrative wisdom, but to that great possession which likens its possessor to God. . . . Solitude, being the school of wisdom, is a good moulder of character and exalts the souls of men. For nothing is there to hinder their growth, no constant petty usages against which they will strike and grow crooked like the souls which are caught in the prison of politics. But these live in an unsullied atmosphere, for the most part beyond the pale of human contact, and grow straight, and take to themselves wings, bathed in the radiance and softness of peace, in which learning is more divine and clearer to discern.”¹

¹ Teubner ed., vol. vii, p. 119.

PART II

*SOME SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF
PLUTARCH'S TEACHING*

CHAPTER XII

ÆSTHETICS IN EDUCATION

THE influence of poetry on the development of the human race cannot be denied. In its way it plays as indispensable a part as science. When Plutarch says that it is a preparation for philosophy,¹ although he does not elaborate the point in this or any other passage, he touches on a truth which, as we know from several scattered references, was an important motive in his teaching.

In analysing his views on the educational value of the old Greek poets, we were sometimes a little scandalised by their apparent crudeness. But all artistic criticism is in a large measure conventional. It varies from age to age and from people to people. When Lucan is in fashion Vergil must be out of date. A fixed standard of æsthetics is impossible. Beauty is such a personal matter that it can be regarded only as a relative term. But a study of other people's ideas of beauty, no matter how alien and remote, must help to clarify our own. The present age is not on the whole remarkable for clearness of thought about æsthetics.

Plutarch nowhere attempts to define poetry. It was not a question that interested him or his contemporaries. He presented his pupils with some of the

¹ προφιλοσοφητέον τοῖς ποιήμασιν (*Quomodo adolescens*, 15 F).

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world's most beautiful examples of it, but he only partly appreciated their value.

Of the two chief values of poetry, that appealed to him the more which appeals to us the less. Poetry may be valuable for its conveyance of distinct and logical ideas, that is, it may be didactic in the broadest sense. Plutarch says that the works of Empedocles, Parmenides, Nicander, and Theognis¹ are so plain and didactic that they are not really poetry but mere verse (*μέτρον*). He might have placed Hesiod in the same category, as modern scholars do, but perhaps here his judgment was biassed by patriotic or local motives.² Be that as it may, it was a pity to deny any quality of beauty to didacticism as such. Beauty should be sought whenever possible. There is much of it in Lucretius and Wordsworth which few would willingly forgo. Science, ethics, and æsthetics are all component parts of a great complex whole. If the young are trained not to differentiate mechanically between them, they will, when they are old, have the more glorious vision.

Poetry which has no didactic aim has, nevertheless, a distinct mental value in its suggestive rhythm or colour, and may be fruitful in thought while devoid of definite logical statement. Sappho is an example. Plutarch is conscious of her force, though he does not examine its artistic basis. *ἀληθῶς μεμιγμένα πυρὶ φθέγγεται*, he says of her, and he often quotes her most impassioned utterances with evident appreciation. He clearly recognises her artistic excellence; he speaks of her *ἐν τοῖς μέλεσι καλλιγραφία*. Pindar he specially loved, though here, again, local patriotism may have influenced his judgment. He quotes from him frequently, and more than once he used the poet's

¹ 16 C.

² See ch. 7.

lines to make his theological teaching more pictorial or impressive.¹ The spell of the author with whose words he was so familiar was with him continually. The egoistical basis of lyric poetry appealed to him, as it does to most people.

There is no doubt that Plutarch was very susceptible to the influence of artistic form. Seeing that he was a teacher, it is a pity that he did not realise this influence more. The question of versification touches the very root of poetry. Aristotle and Plato were apt to overlook its importance, and together they imposed such a limitation on Greek literary appreciation that Plutarch, in spite of his deep thinking on the subject of emotion, was unaware of the possible influences of poetic form in this connection. He failed to realise that beauty of form has much to do with ethical consequence.

Æsthetics hardly comes within Plutarch's wide range of interests. The old creative power which had wrought in Greece such miracles in stone and marble, in colour and form, as well as in language, had died, and in his age there was no impulse towards æsthetic study. Moreover, Plutarch probably had an instinctive aversion to concentration on such a subject, owing to its close relation to the emotions. The response to beauty in any form lies deep in the emotional side of our nature. Æsthetic judgments are based on immediate experience, and have no reference to ultimate utility. They are thus non-intellectual and non-moral. A short reference to Plutarch's system of psychology will show why to him they are unimportant.

He calls poetry an "imitative art," and says that

¹ e.g. *De super.* 167 C-F.

when we estimate an artistic value our criterion should be fidelity to fact or nature. This of itself shows how he avoided the real point at issue. Correctness of drawing, or, in general terms, truth to the thing copied, is not a sound criterion in a work of art. It is only one of the conditions favourable to the existence of beauty. Beauty does not consist of imitation alone. The true artist, in poetry, as in other arts, is not he who depicts exactly what he sees. He has a moral system which may be found in his artistic representations. His acceptance of beauty is as spontaneous as the laws of æsthetics require ; but it is carried to a more perfect conclusion by being worked over by the moral faculties. The true interpreter must meet both these phenomena on their own ground. Plutarch met the one and avoided the other.

It has been well said that beauty is no quality in things themselves ; it exists merely in the mind that contemplates them. It is necessary to accept the relativity of æsthetic values, and Plutarch's attitude must be regarded as a peculiarity of temperament rather than as an error of judgment. That beauty exists in the mind of the subject and not in the object is by now accepted, and it explains why what seems beautiful to one age or nation does not do so to another. 'The music of the East sounds dreary and monotonous to our Western ears. On the same principle we flatter ourselves that in Homer and Sophocles we can see beauty which Plutarch missed. It may be a cause for rejoicing, but it is not a reason for dogmatism. It is still possible that he and we in equal measure try to teach appreciation of beauty according to our lights.

In our advance beyond Aristotle's requirements we do not go to the opposite extreme of believing that

poetry can exist by virtue of form alone. There must be also a certain atmosphere, an insistent element of personality. Wordsworth said, "That which comes from the heart goes to the heart." Poetry cannot consist of artificial embellishments. It must be clear and true; that is, it must have a certain amount of realism, a certain touch with the sanity of the external world. Realism is a difficult question, and there are limits beyond which the realism of a poet should not go. But it was this quality which so endeared Homer to Plutarch, and Plutarch, who was himself so sane, could quote and love him, and make his pupils quote and love him, without destroying any of the dignity or the magic of the old poet. Plutarch felt that his humanity, like that of Sophocles, touched as it was with the highest poetic grace, had a more immediate value than the magnificent but impersonal flights of Pindar's fancy, though these latter are equally indispensable and equally lasting, for "in the poetic heavens there are many mansions." The merit of poets like Wordsworth and Burns is evident. Ordinary life, which to ordinary people seems so prosaic, is to the poet not prosaic but always fresh and wonderful. Our pupils must learn to see life with the eyes of the poet.

"Poetry is an imitative art (μιμητικὴ τέχνη); it is a speaking picture, and painting is silent poetry" (ζωγραφίαν μὲν εἶναι φθεγγομένην τὴν ποίησιν, ποίησιν δὲ σιωπῶσαν τὴν ζωγραφίαν).¹

Plutarch was apparently much impressed with this idea, for he quotes it on more than one occasion. His own interest in painting seems to have been of the mildest, and as far as it went it was historical

¹ *Quomodo adolescens*, 17 F.

rather than æsthetic. This we gather from such passages as that on famous Athenian painters in *De gloria Atheniensium*.¹ He never pursues his analogy far enough to realise that the very nature of poetry sets a limit to its imitative possibilities. Its medium is, of necessity, words. Some phases of life are essentially silent, and in these words have no place. The agony of Œdipus would never have been expressed verbally in actual life, and Sophocles knew it, but he was bound by the conditions of his art, if he attempted the subject at all, to do as he did. It would be equally impossible to express in words the dreaming of the Venus de Milo, or to paint a picture of Sappho's

δέδυκε μέν ἃ σελάννα.

Plutarch was led by his aptitude for quotation to be a little superficial in his interpretation of what he quoted. If we teach that in art we may see life reflected as it were in a mirror, we must not confuse the different phases of life which the different branches of art reveal. It is not necessarily a good plan to set a child to write a poem on a picture, or to depict the thought of a poem pictorially. There are times when Life speaks, and times when it is silent. We must teach that it takes silences as well as sounds to make up the harmony of the universe.

The Greeks seem to have studied poetry not so much in relation to painting as in relation to music and dancing. All Greek boys were taught music. Pindar's father was a musician, and critics are agreed that with the musical notation we have lost the master-key to the interpretation of Pindar's poetry. Many modern readers quite fail to associate these odes with

¹ 346 A-B.

music. It is impossible to say whether the original notation was still preserved in Plutarch's day, but the frequent references to Pindar in the *De musica* show that in theory at least Plutarch was alive to the close relation between this poetry and music.

The link which connects the two is rhythm. In these days it has needed a Dalcrose to teach us fully what rhythm can express. Rhythm in the human body, as well as in any mechanical contrivance humanly controlled, is a certain expression of emotion which goes sometimes beyond the power of words themselves. This is not the place in which to enlarge upon the value of eurhythmics, but it may be remembered that we are not the first people to appreciate the educational importance of rhythm. Plato found many moral complexities involved in it. Plutarch, too, in the *De musica*,¹ is aware of its importance and its dangers. That he was himself very susceptible to rhythm may be shown by a short digression.

He has never found his Zielinski, but it is easy to see that he was as rhythmical in his prose-writing as was Cicero. This feature of his style is naturally best studied in the most important part of his sentences—the end. He is not dully iambic, as it is so easy to be in Greek. He has two favourite final rhythms. One is – ∪ – ∪, which is light and suggestive; the other is – – ∪ –, which is a little heavier, but is frequently lightened by the resolution of the antepenultimate syllable, making the agreeable phrase – ∪ ∪ ∪ –. He is also addicted, though in less measure, to a dactylic rhythm, and he is free from Cicero's aversion to the phrase – ∪ ∪ – –. In moments of emphasis this collects itself into the impressive – – – –, and just occasionally

¹ Ch. 33.

is resolved into $\cup \cup - - -$. His remaining final rhythms allow themselves to be classified into some half-dozen groups, but the types just specified form more than three-quarters of his total, and prove that, though in his treatises on literature he did not greatly emphasise the importance of literary form, his ear was remarkably, if unconsciously, sensitive to its charm. A teacher's practice, even when not upheld by deliberate theory, is of unbounded influence, and Plutarch's pupils cannot have remained unaffected by their master's musical ear in literature.

We have thus dealt, as far as Plutarch's writings suggest the subject, with the relation of literature, especially of poetry, to the other arts. Some poets try to paint a picture, while others try to sing a song. The supreme artist is he whose pictorial and musical powers are so interfused that dissection becomes impossible. Most of the Greek poets combine these powers, Sappho and Homer perhaps particularly. To these, later ages have added a few, such as Keats and Coleridge. In dealing with ancient or with modern poets, it is best not to bewilder or prejudice the young mind with technical language about the relation between the arts. At the most, the merest hint should suffice, as Plutarch found; and the years will bring their understanding afterwards.

It has been shown that Plutarch is somewhat reckless in his interpretation of the poets about whom he writes. Modern critics usually exercise more restraint. In the varying degrees, however, a poet's egoism is apparent in his poetry, and it is difficult to know how it should be treated by the older and the younger reader.

Poets may be divided into two classes. On the one

hand there are such poets as Sappho and Anacreon, the lyricists, whose impulse is pure egoism. Their work is conditioned by the personal element, and they are usually so much preoccupied with their own emotions that their interest in the world around them is small. On the other hand there are the dramatists, such as Sophocles and Euripides; one may also include the writers of the Homeric poems, especially the poet of the *Iliad*. With these the creative instinct is so vividly at work that the poet's own individuality does not obtrude itself into his invention. His poetic imagination can produce characters taken by his outward vision from humanity at large, and it can make them play upon his stage without any reference to his own personality. A good deal of epic and narrative poetry lies half-way between these two groups. Vergil is a typical instance, but he seems to have been unread by Plutarch. The *Prometheus Vinc-tus* of Æschylus, too, has a distinctly lyrical motive peculiar to that one type of drama.

Not only the poet's attitude, but the reader's too, may be either dramatic or lyric. A child's first literary impulse is entirely dramatic. He surrenders his own personality into that of a character created for him by somebody else. Introduce him to something really dramatic, from "The Wreck of the Hesperus" to "The Revenge," and his attitude will certainly be objective. Introduce him to a lyric, say "Daffodils" or "The Ode to a Skylark," and he will either distort its original intention and regard it as an objective statement about a particular flower or bird, or he will refuse altogether to admit it as part of his personality. People vary in the degree to which they retain this dramatic outlook of their childhood. The lyric outlook is a later development, and, though

equally natural, is much more self-conscious. Few people can read a lyric passage without making a more or less deliberate effort to transfuse it into their own thought, and make it in some way their own expression. The process involves a certain amount of introspection, not the cold and scientific scrutiny of the systematic psychologist, but a personal interest in passing emotions. In this way, the more emotions there are, the more fruitful the literary study.

Nations go through the same phases of development. Greece may be taken as an example. The Homeric epic was composed in the highest spirit of drama. The dithyramb, too, whatever its relation to primitive tragedy, or to man's material needs, was essentially dramatic. The lyric element began later, and, in spite of its vigour, it did not oust drama from Greek literature. The evolution of literary criticism took place on the same lines, but was much slower. By the age of Longinus (his date is uncertain, but let us say the second century A.D.) a certain amount of introspection and subjectivity was apparent in it. Plutarch's standpoint, however, was as external as Plato's had been. This is proved in many ways, such as his treatment (at the end of the *Præcepta coniugalia*) of Sappho's lines :

κατάνοισα δὲ κείσεται, οὐδὲ τις μναμοσύνα σέθεν
ἔσεται· οὐ γὰρ πεδέχεις ῥόδων
τῶν ἐκ Πειρίας.

Here he mentions pride as suitable to the model wife, whom he is addressing ; that the pride which he quotes was Sappho's is only incidental to his argument. His treatment of Homer in the *Quomodo adolescens* is external even to the externalities of the epic. In some

places he makes a deliberate effort to get away from Homer's intended meaning, although in this essay he is treating particularly of the presentation of poetry to the young. This is extreme. No doubt the teaching of literature by the medium of the drama has its dangers—Plato warned the world with much truth and thoughtfulness on that point. The dangers can, however, be met to a large extent by a judicious selection of the drama submitted to the young. The teacher is as external to the drama as the pupil, and is in a position to gauge its effect. The psychological effect of the lyric side of literature is a perplexing study. It penetrates farther into the mind of the pupil than the teacher can follow. Introspection knows no bounds to its shapes and fancies, which may be morbid or extravagant or in other ways undesirable. Since introspection must come to everyone, its advent in the pupil must be faced by the teacher with all the more care by reason of its dangerous possibilities. The effect of lyric poetry on it should be prudently watched, though not so much feared as it is by Plutarch.

In Plutarch's day the old Greek drama was more often read in the study than seen on the stage. The harrowing rôle played by the head of Crassus in the performance of the *Bacchæ* at the court of the King of Parthia is evidence that in the first century B.C. dramatic performance was not moribund. A century later Greek education was becoming the poorer by the decreasing popularity of this method of stimulating imagination and thought. A remark of Leslie Stephen is not inapposite: "A play may be read as well as seen, but it calls for an effort of imagination on the part of the reader which can never quite supply the place of sight; and the play intended only for the study

becomes simply a novel told in a clumsy method." Certainly a play intended for the stage and relegated to the study is robbed of the vitality of even a clumsy novel. In Plutarch's day the Greek mind had lost that freshness of youth which takes a spontaneous delight in fiction. Marvellous creations, such as *Ædipus* and *Iphigenia*, were regarded as little more than sources for detached quotations. This is not a question of the age of individual teachers and learners, but of age as revealed in a nation. The young in years will always be prematurely old in thought if their teachers are old in thought too. It is an irreparable loss to a country when its people, young and old, are without the children's imaginative insight into fiction. The faculty which can illuminate the whole of life with romance and colour must not lightly be allowed to die. Where the older generation is absorbed in the grown-up point of view, the children's interest cannot stand against it. Plutarch was terribly grown up; he might have said, like St. Paul, "When I became a man, I put away childish things." Plutarch's great gift as a narrator cannot be denied, but it dealt with facts and not with fiction. We cannot blame him, for he was the natural product of his age. But on this account he is not an example but a warning.

CHAPTER XIII

INDIVIDUALISM

THE individualistic tendencies of the later Greek philosophies have become a commonplace. We have on several occasions found them in the works of Plutarch. Their influence upon his educational theory is worth examination.

Plutarch's principle of self-centralisation is founded on the old maxim of *γνῶθι σεαυτόν*. To him, knowledge of any kind was a treasure to be sought eagerly and held fast : " Truth being the greatest good that man can receive, and the goodliest blessing that God can give." ¹ But self-knowledge, the understanding of one's own soul, the acquisition of the truth which equips the soul for immortality, is, in his view, the treasure beyond price, at which all education should aim. Interest in one's own soul is one of his favourite principles. It is not merely a detached spiritual ideal ; it is to be carried out in all the ordinary affairs of life. Introspection is recommended in one passage as an antidote to excessive interest in other people's business ; ² and in the essay *De adulatore et amico* ³ we are warned that the chief evil of a flatterer is that his influence runs counter to the principle of *γνῶθι σεαυτόν*.

Plutarch's attitude is conspicuous in his essays on minor morals. In the *De ira cohibenda* ⁴ he says that

¹ De Is., ch. 1.

² De cur.

³ Ch. 1.

⁴ Ch. 2.

anger and bad temper cannot be cured by the exhortations of other people ; they are ills which each sufferer must combat alone. Throughout the essay, anger is considered for the evil it works in the soul of the angry man himself, not for the effect it has on the peace and comfort of others. Similarly, in the *De vitioso pudore* shyness is treated as a handicap on the career of the shy person, not as a fertile source of embarrassment to his friends and acquaintances. The treatise *De utilitate ex inimicis capienda* is equally subjective in its outlook. But the essay which teaches this lesson almost more than any other is the *De tranquillitate animi*. Here, in order not to be disturbed or grieved by the imperfect workings of the universe, we are told to take no notice of the perverse behaviour of others, not to trouble ourselves about their sins or failings. We are even bidden to look at those who are worse off than ourselves, not with a view to rendering them assistance, but in order to cheer ourselves with the thought of our superior condition.

There are undoubtedly elements of wisdom in this, but at first sight it seems to be very specious teaching.

But Plutarch sometimes teaches altruism. The most important passage in which he dwells on a man's duty towards his fellows is the *Ad principem ineruditum*: "A ruler should take care lest any harm befall his subjects unawares."¹ We are told, too, how the King of Persia kept a slave whose duty it was to go to him every morning and say, "Arise, O king, and take thought for the duties which the great Oromasdes requires of you." Plutarch adds that a thoughtful and educated ruler will rely on his own conscience, not on an external assistant, for this reminder²—*ἡγεμόν* (ruler) may be

¹ 781 C.

² 780 C.

interpreted broadly, in the sense of anyone holding public office, either municipal or imperial. Plutarch, in his many rôles as a public man, was no doubt thinking partly of himself as he wrote this essay—a fact which increases the weight of the passage.

The principle here laid down is occasionally supported in other treatises. In the *De latenter vivendo* Plutarch rises to unusual heights of altruism in combating the Epicureans' preference for an obscure and self-centred existence. In polemical matters, however, he may have committed himself to arguments which did not form an important part of his practical scheme of life. Nevertheless, his words concerning the influence of our virtue on other people deserve quotation: ὥσπερ δ', οἶμαι, τὸ φῶς οὐ μόνον φανεροῦς ἀλλὰ καὶ χρησίμους καθίστησιν ἡμᾶς ἀλλήλοις, οὕτως ἡ γνώσις οὐ μόνον δόξαν ἀλλὰ καὶ πρᾶξιν ταῖς ἀρεταῖς δίδωσιν.¹

Again, in the *An seni sit* he tells how not only love of honour, but also zeal for the public good, can never grow weak with age, and he recalls how Augustus, Pericles, and Agesilaus even in their latest years did not relax their vigilance and care for the welfare of their subjects and fellow-men.

In most other passages Plutarch suggests that the chief value of an active and altruistic existence lies in the moral advantage and personal satisfaction obtained. This is brought out with particular force in the *Non posse*, one of his polemics against the Epicureans. Here ¹ Theon is made to quote the saying τὸ εὖ ποιεῖν ἡδίων ἐστὶ τοῦ εὖ πάσχειν; this is a curious reminder of the phraseology of New Testament ethics, though the idea of pure pleasure in well-doing is alien. The thought is repeated a little later ² in a quotation from

¹ 1129 C.² 1097 A.³ 1098 A.

Herodotus—τῷ πρακτικῷ βίῳ τὸ ἡδὺ πλεόν ἢ τὸ καλὸν ἐστίν. The company is told that Epaminondas said that the sweetest part of all his triumph was the thought that his mother had lived to witness it. It is suggested that Epicurus could hardly congratulate himself in the same way. Then¹ we are told what satisfaction there is to oneself in remembering one's past deeds. Could Alexander ever forget Arbela, or Pelopidas the tyrant Leontiadas? These deeds of valour conferred great benefit on many men, but their sweetest fruit fell to the doers, in the pleasure of their remembrance afterwards.

The importance of self-satisfaction receives another tribute in Plutarch's teaching on friendship. In *De multitudine amicorum* he says that the three foundations of friendship are: virtue, since it is lovely and desirable; familiarity, since it promotes a feeling of pleasantness; and personal advantage, since it is a necessity! The thought that in friendship one must insist upon receiving as well as upon giving recurs in *De adulatore*: "All acts of kindness and mutual benefit are constant attendants upon true friendship: and thus we may say, 'A friend is more necessary than fire and water.'" Here is no attempt to disguise the ulterior motives for one man's pleasant dealings with another. Every person, thing, or event is to be estimated by its application to one's personal advantage. This notion of Plutarch's was probably Stoic in origin. We find it in the *De tranquillitate animi*: "Since, then, the fountain of content is within ourselves, let us keep it clear, so that outward circumstances may become familiar and congenial through our cheerful acceptance of them." We are even shown an opposite side to

¹ 1099 E.² 467 A.

our recent picture of the beneficent and disinterested ruler: "Do not allow your subjects an opportunity of finding fault with your own life and manners."¹ Elsewhere he goes further. It is amazing to find our Bæotarch and telearch enlarging on the joys of being defeated in elections and on the advantages of the ensuing private life. ἀρχὴν παραγγέλλων, διήμαρτες; ἐν ἀγρῷ διάξεις ἐπιμελούμενος τῶν ἰδίων.²

The thought recurs in the essay *De exilio*, but here it is hardly so surprising when we remember that this treatise was probably addressed to a particular Roman celebrity banished to an island in the Ægean. It is likely that among the many Roman exiles living in the Cyclades there ran an undercurrent of politics of which we know nothing and of which the imperial government would have liked to know much more than it did. Failing the identity of the recipient of Plutarch's treatise, and in the absence of information about his relations with these mysterious personages, it is impossible to estimate the genuineness of the sentiment here expressed. He has two chief trains of thought. One is individualistic, upholding the advantages of complete detachment from the rest of humanity: "Aristotle has his breakfast when it suits Philip, but Diogenes has his when it suits himself."³ The other is cosmopolitan: "Nature allows no motherland"; "better the saying of Socrates, that he was a citizen, not of Athens nor of Greece, but of the whole world."⁴

The problem was old, and Plutarch's debt to the Stoic attempts to solve it is obvious. One of the first principles of Stoic ethics was to make morality an inward matter, personal to the individual. Every

¹ Præc. rp. ger., ch. 4.

³ 604 D.

² De tran. an., 467 D.

⁴ 600 E.

educated person was considered to carry within himself a witness and judge of his virtues and vices : Plutarch accepted this. Nevertheless, in the economy of life everyone was said to have to fulfil a certain function which was marked out for him by circumstances over which he had no control, but which it was his duty to face. It had to be dealt with, and he had no choice in the matter. Where he was perfectly free was in the manner of his dealing with it. It is true that the earlier Stoics had tended to withdraw their adherents from public life, but by the time they came into contact with the activities of Roman imperialism this morbid phase had practically ceased to exist. Lastly, the Stoics held by the doctrine of humanity. Men were all children of one great father, and citizens of one universal state. Nature intended them to be social and to love one another, and the private interests of each should be identified with the universal interest.

This is more difficult in practice than in theory, and on the last point Plutarch follows the Stoics less closely. His cosmopolis was the Roman Empire, and the chief emotion which this evoked from him was simple admiration. The main duty which it seemed to require from the individual was freedom from strife and sedition, and since such a condition of quietude was compatible with endless philosophic meditation on the part of the individual the scheme was consistently pleasant for all. Neither the Stoics nor Plutarch nor succeeding philosophers have ever really succeeded in reconciling individualist and altruist principles.

It is a subject on which the teacher is most anxious to reach a definite conclusion, and yet nowhere is it easier to argue in a circle. The egoist asserts that self

is all-important in the application of moral principles. The altruist's theory of conduct regards the good of others as the end of moral action. Yet every deliberate action which is based on an avowedly altruistic principle has a necessary reference to the agent. "If it is right that A should do a certain action for the benefit of B, then it tends to the moral self-realisation of A that he should do it." So our pupils may conclude that egoism and altruism are convertible terms, and we may find that we have educated a Nietzsche who condemns every form of self-denial as cowardice.

Again, Herbert Spencer pointed out that neither pure egoism nor pure altruism is really practicable; for unless the egoist's happiness is in some measure compatible with that of his fellows, their antagonism will be almost certain to mar his enjoyment. Moreover, the altruist who devotes himself to promoting the good of others as his highest obligation is realising and not sacrificing himself.

We have seen that Plutarch frequently urges altruism on egoistic principles: "Do good to others for the sake of the good which the action will do to you." He uses altruism as a method, not as an end. Here he is in contrast with Christian ethics, which, in theory at least, sets up altruism as the end, and regards the implied egoism as purely incidental.

Plutarch, in fact, is intent on self-realisation in a somewhat peculiar form. None of the Greek moralists worked out the theory so far as their modern successors have done. We have come to see that the growth of a definite self-interest in the individual is properly accompanied by a growing consciousness of the interests of others. The interest of self is seen not always to be in harmony with the interests of others, and the

opposing interests must in some way be adjusted. The interest of the self as an individual must be absorbed into the combined interests of the many selves forming society. The necessity of this adjustment, with its accompanying self-sacrifice, was first divined in the ethics of Christianity.

The function of this doctrine in education must depend on the condition of the particular state or world for which the education is designed. In Plutarch's time the stability of the social order of the Empire seemed assured. One half of the community realised itself and the other half did not, and no one believed that this way of things might or ought to be changed. But in an age of the delicate readjustment of the social and personal balance, other people's position and feelings should surely be allowed, in some form, as a subject of education. When the age is at the same time one of uncertainty and upheaval, when the defensive and offensive attitudes are so often called into play that they become implicated in one another, and often hard to distinguish, it is certainly not fair to teach the younger generation altruism as a rigid principle. A hard metal will not yield to a soft tool. Since children must not be altruists while the rest of the world is egoist, and since the world will never be altruist so long as the children are egoists, the question reverts to Plutarch's conundrum of the hen and the egg, and it is difficult to know where to begin. At this point Plutarch may be allowed to supply his never-failing doctrine of *μηδὲν ἄγαν*—moderation, gentleness, adjustment. The world having proceeded as far as it has, we dare not drop the altruism which its progress has given us. We can learn to understand all Plutarch's contentment in self-realisation. It is

only because our age is constructed so differently from his that we have to adapt it to new needs.

Much has been written in recent years on self-realisation as a criterion of morals, and when attempts are made to use the doctrine thus, many objections are raised by opponents. Three of these objections seem to be important.

First, it is said, how can you discriminate between acts, calling some good and others bad, when all are equally natural expressions of the self? The answer to this is that self-realisation finds its morality in the realisation of the whole self in all its aspects and activities; it chooses as its principle the self in its unity, not isolated elements of it. The activity of the self is comprehensive; it involves aspects of thought, feeling, and action; and the morality in question is related, not to an abstraction, but to a vital organism in connection with the actual conditions of human life. It is impossible for genuine self-realisation to exclude contact with the rest of humanity. Thus the criterion of morality becomes at once general and clearly defined. Plutarch has shown¹ that Epaminondas' satisfaction at the supreme moment of his triumph was referred to his mother's feelings as the touchstone of its perfection. In another passage² Plutarch refers us, even in our most introspective efforts towards contentment with life, to the standard of other people's circumstances:

οἷμοι· τί δ' οἷμοι; θιγῆτά τοι πεπόνθαμεν.

Thus, if self-realisation as a moral criterion is inextricably involved with altruism and its concomitant moral aspect, the first objection vanishes.

¹ *Non posse*, 1098 A.

² *De tranquillitate*, ch. 17.

Secondly, the opponents say it reduces virtue to a form of knowledge. Why not? We have already seen how Plutarch worked out the problem, and found in Plato and Aristotle, in various ways, a great deal of support for using the intellect as his ultimate basis of morality, by reason of its immortality and its relation to the Real and the True and the Good.

The third objection which has been raised is that self-realisation conflicts with the most patent fact of moral life, namely, the worth of self-sacrifice. This has already been shown to be untrue. No self is realised apart from the devotion to human service which is spent for others without expectation of ulterior gain. The need of it is in every mind. *ἄνθρωπος πολιτικὸν ζῶον*. Let the young realise all their native potentialities for altruism. Self-realisation need not—had better not—be a synonym for introspection, for introspection in youth may become morbid, and this opens up a whole vista of dangers and of disqualifications for normal social existence, which the educator is reluctant to contemplate. Let us make our youth begin, as Plutarch did, with the external world, and with willing and disinterested service in it; but we will not, like Plutarch, explain to them beforehand the good which it will bring to their own souls. In time they will realise it for themselves, and this will be self-realisation at its best.

CHAPTER XIV

MORAL INSTRUCTION IN THE CURRICULUM

THERE is hardly a section in all Plutarch's teaching in which the moral note is not predominant. His insistence on it is perhaps most marked in his teaching of literature and in his presentation of history; but even such unlikely subjects as science and music acquire in his hands a distinct moral bias. Most important of all, he has left a considerable number of treatises devoted entirely to moral questions. Some of these were in their original form lectures, and through all of them the mind of the professional teacher is clearly recognisable. The fact that such weighty moral instruction was characteristic of all teaching in Plutarch's day does not detract from its interest.

Two questions are raised in connection with the subject. First, how far can morals be imparted by direct instruction? Secondly, to what extent should they be made part of the curriculum?

There is no doubt that the young are very much interested in questions of right and wrong, and this interest, if cultivated in childhood under the care of a wise teacher, may become a persistent moral force in later years. Children never tire of thinking and talking about moral questions. In school and out of school, their researches into this inexhaustible topic are as spontaneous as they are fruitful.

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Their reception of the results of other people's researches varies. Some are impressionable and docile, and readily carry out their elders' suggestions, however direct or even imperious, about the proper course of right conduct. Others have a strain of independence which makes it difficult for them to adopt any course unless they definitely feel it to be based on their own initiative. These are "led rather than driven." Moral suggestion has to be presented only in the most indirect and subtle form. In the absence of their docility, the teacher has to play on their instinct for independent imitation. The first group will acquire moral instruction chiefly through the medium of verbal training, the second chiefly through the medium of deeds. The ordinary mind accepts both kinds of teaching, and most teachers find that both means are necessary, and implicit in one another.

Naturally, most of what Plutarch taught by his own life and actions is lost to us now. Certain personal anecdotes in his writings indicate that he was well aware of the importance of this side of his teaching, and though his formal written teaching of morals is all that is left to us, it would not be fair to conclude that his interest in moral instruction was confined to that. The number of his treatises which were written directly and solely for the purpose of moral teaching is remarkable. Essays and lecture-notes on such subjects as anger, avarice, shyness, and meddlesomeness do not figure among the literary remains of the modern teacher. How far is this formal and systematic moral instruction possible and desirable among us ?

Few of our schools systematise it beyond the step of attaching it, in a rather haphazard way, to the formal Divinity lesson. Apart from this, most of them depend

on the incidental opportunities offered by ordinary school life, and, in a smaller degree, by the ordinary subjects of the curriculum. They argue very rightly that formal lessons must and always will, in spite of all the reformers, have some aspect of taskwork. Formal lessons on morals would inevitably import a sense of constraint and convention just where it is particularly necessary that the atmosphere should be one of openness and spontaneity. The argument has to be modified according to the age of the subject to which it is directed. At the age of four the individual must have his conduct laid down for him, without appeal, by a wise and firm authority; at twenty-four he must have taken up a position of complete freedom of rational choice. It is in the intermediate stages, while his moral thinking is more or less consciously passing from dependence to independence, that the problem becomes most acute. Formal discussion of the matter at stated hours on stated days, and the first plunge into a scientific study of ethics, must not begin too early; they require delicate handling always. Presumably Plutarch's extant moral instruction, as was common in Greece, was addressed chiefly to the young adult. Moral discourse was, however, clearly a habit with him, and it is unlikely that he realised the extent and effect of his instructive prolixity.

We expect the young, in the course of their moral development, to do two things. They are to think about their conduct, to acquire a rational and independent standpoint in the matter, and to idealise it. Secondly, they are to get beyond their own ideas, to recognise and respect other people's, and to find in the *communis sensus* of morals in their environment some kind of criterion for their own standards.

Morality, in fact, has both a personal and a social outlook. We have already seen that the side which appealed most to Plutarch was the personal. He speaks with praise of the philosophy of Socrates,¹ "the design of which was to teach men how to discover their own ills and apply proper remedies to them." In the essay *De tranquillitate animi*² he goes so far as to write thus: "Such is our folly that we acquire the habit of living all our lives with our eyes on other people instead of on ourselves, and we become so prone to envy and malice that we find more pain in other people's prosperity than pleasure in our own." His moral essays prove beyond a doubt that a man may find much food for thought in his own soul. His ethics look inward rather than outward.

Even the social aspect of his morality has a characteristically personal turn. In his essay on Anger, for example, he is less concerned with the effect of a man's anger on his victims than with its effect on the angry man himself—the distortions of his face, his loss of dignity and self-respect, and even possible self-inflicted injury to his person. Plutarch's attitude towards the bearing of minor morals on social relations introduces a point of his teaching which cannot be too heavily emphasised or too highly praised in these days, namely, the cultivation of good manners. By birth a courteous Southerner, he insists everywhere, in ways varying from the most subtle to the most outspoken, on the necessity of politeness and good breeding. It would be possible to compile a very edifying handbook of manners out of the writings of Plutarch. He tells us not to gossip, not to pry into other people's business, not to interrupt conversations, not to be laggards in receiving and

¹ De cur. 516 C.

² 471 A.

giving hospitality—"if you invite, you must expect to be invited again"¹; to be courteous even to a nagging wife, not to snatch food at the dinner-table, not to yawn or fidget or otherwise betray boredom at the discourse of those in authority. - His instructions are countless, and meet every possible contingency of social life. Some of his advice is so elementary that to many it is apt to appear extremely amusing. Nevertheless, the subject-matter is worth serious thought on the part of modern educators, for in the inculcation of politeness among the young, the wise and courteous old Greeks were far beyond us. If Plutarch teaches us something here, even on the strength of this alone his work will not have been in vain.

It is true that whereas Plutarch bases this part of his teaching rather too exclusively on the pupil's own self-respect, we may with advantage extend that basis to include the pupil's consideration for others. The motive of courtesy is certainly important, and Plutarch may justly be criticised for not having developed fully an idea of which the germ was undoubtedly present in his mind. His *Præcepta coniugalia* and some of his remarks on friendship show that he realised the necessity of mutual help and mutual surrender in the smooth progress of social relationships, while the whole essay *De recta ratione audiendi* is intended to inculcate the proper deference of youth towards age. His times did not demand such great stress upon the virtue of obedience as ours do; but the principle which we require is to be found in his writings. He never takes a stand on pride or stubbornness. He never makes a great cry about rights, and he hated to see unfriendly rivalry. The idea of anyone clamouring to rule everyone else

¹ De vit. pud., ch. 4.

would have shocked him painfully. To him a simple relation between ruler and ruled was one of the fundamental principles of existence, and he viewed it with perfect content in every social organisation—the family, the school, the town, the Roman Empire, and the whole universe. Our notion of “self-government” has developed with democracy, and, paradoxical as it may seem, it is likely to be democracy’s worst enemy. To obey well is as fine an art and as necessary a social adjunct as to rule well, and they rule best who know best how to obey. We must adopt as a clear principle what Plutarch divined but vaguely, that the greater the authority we wish our pupil to have among his fellows in later years, the more insistent must be his lessons in willing and intelligent obedience during childhood.

The root of the matter lies in the cultivation of consideration for other people, and this is largely a question of imagination. The development of dramatic imagination as a moral guide is a process of the greatest intricacy and interest. The works of the masters of history, drama, and romance form an inexhaustible mine for the purpose. Plutarch knew this, though the way in which he avails himself of the knowledge is sometimes a little startling. It is a means to moral guidance that imagination in a child should be so developed that he can work out from a proposed course of conduct a chain of probable consequences both good and evil. We have already seen how Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* form one long deliberate lesson in morality, as drawn in history. His method of dealing with literature is more uncouth. In *Quomodo adolescens* he condemns the ethics of such classical passages as the boasting of Hector¹ and Achilles’ ill-

¹ viii. 198.

treatment of Hector's dead body,¹ but he dwells on the indignity of the immediate situation rather than on the terrible consequences in prospect. He looks more into the future, and thus more nearly meets our requirements, when he tells his own stories for a moral end. Here his teaching is sometimes extraordinarily good, for he gives a dramatic and sympathetic portrayal of the mental processes of the sinner and his victim. One example is worth quoting in full.² The subject of the story is indiscretion.

“Seleucus Callinicus, having lost his whole army and resources in a battle against the Galatians, tore off his crown, and fled away on horseback with three or four companions. He travelled hurriedly over waste places and rough roads, and at last, being faint for want of food, he made his way to a farm, and by good luck finding the owner at home, he asked him for some bread and water. The owner, who was a kindly person, gave a generous supply of these and such other refreshments as his farm provided, and in the course of doing so recognised the king's face. He was so delighted at this coincidence of the monarch's need sending him to his house, that he could not contain his emotion or appreciate the king's desire to remain unnoticed. So when he took leave of his monarch, after escorting him a little on his way, he said, ‘Good-bye, King Seleucus.’ Thereupon the king stretched out his right hand and drew his host towards him as if to embrace him. Then he made a sign to one of his companions to cut off the man's head with his sword.

And in the midst of his speech his head was mingled in the dust.

¹ Il. xxiii. 24.

² De garrul. 508 D-F.

Whereas if he could have but held his peace for a short time he would have been more richly rewarded by the king in his subsequent years of triumph and prosperity for his silence than for his hospitality."

This is a really moral story. But some of Plutarch's moral stories are educationally not so good. Sometimes his imaginative description is dramatic without being sympathetic; and in such cases there lurks a certain danger.

The story¹ of the Roman senator who experimented to see if his wife could keep a secret is too long for quotation in full. It tells, in effect, how the wife was consumed with curiosity about a secret piece of business which the Senate had been debating for several days. She questioned her husband with such persistence and such solemn assurances of respecting his confidence, that at last he grew tired of it, and, determining to put her off with a falsehood, told her, under the strictest pledge of secrecy, that the priests had seen a lark with a golden helmet on its head and a spear in one of its claws, and that the Senate was discussing the significance of the portent. He then walked off to the forum. Immediately upon his departure, the wife confided the terrible secret to one of her maids, who in her turn passed it on to her sweetheart. The result was that the rumour reached the forum in time to greet the senator himself on his arrival there. The story ends with the senator's appropriate comments to his wife upon her indiscretion.

The danger of a story like this is that real sympathy may not be stirred in the hearer. It is not enough to charge a mind with detached and vicarious emotions: the emotions must be coloured according to the nature

¹ De garrul. 507 B - 508 C.

of the particular environment to which they belong. The habit of coldly imagining the contents of another's mind, without any emotional contact with it, either of sympathy or of antipathy, is not to be encouraged. It is clearly the duty of the teacher who has a facility for telling dramatic stories, and desires his stories to have a moral end, to consider their emotional effect. Dramatic sympathy may be made into one of his readiest means of moral teaching.

On the other hand, this sympathy must not be overworked. It may lead in the young mind to emotional exhaustion, a state in which the subject will cast around for some means of self-defence, and probably take refuge in callousness. Plutarch guarded against this. Some of the scenes in his *Parallel Lives* are really harrowing through their extraordinarily vivid portrayal of moral crises. The death of Philopœmen and the murder of Pompey, as described by him, stir the reader's depths when he remembers the ethical issues involved in these events. But such passages are not so frequent as to lose the force of their appeal. Here our philosopher was very wise, for it is remarkable how easily the young become hardened to horrors in literature if they are allowed to assimilate them in undue quantities.

The strong and the weak points in Plutarch's system of moral teaching have now been considered. Speaking generally, its quality may be said to be very good. But is it desirable to make so much of it, so openly, and in such detail in the curriculum? Not only did he lecture specifically on various questions of ethics, but he imported a moral bearing into every other subject which he taught. Ethics, it is true, formed the predominating interest of

all the philosophers and teachers of his age. This explains, though it does not justify, his point of view. The modern judgment probably is that, while he did not overrate the importance of morals in his own mind (a wise educator could hardly do that), he let them bulk rather too largely in the minds of his pupils. He allowed the subject to dim their view of the Beautiful, and to blunt their feelings for the Sublime, the Humorous, and the Grotesque. In fact, it prevented them from regarding humanity from as many angles as we ourselves like to do ; and that was a pity, though it was not a crime. The young may become too much absorbed in moral problems. The teacher should take advantage of their natural interest, but not press it further than the laws of sanity and open-mindedness require.

CHAPTER XV

RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND ETHICS : THEIR PLACE IN EDUCATION

PLUTARCH'S phrase *θεολογία τέλος φιλοσοφίας* opens up a large question.

Greek philosophy, in its earlier stages, was on the whole remarkably independent of religious tradition. Down to the time of Anaxagoras we hear little of opposition to philosophy on the part of the representatives of religion. There was indeed no reason why opposition should exist. There was no powerful national priesthood whose interests might be endangered by free-thinking, nor was there a sacred book of which the teaching was upheld by any sect in defiance of the development of thought. It is true that in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Athens was guilty of three notorious acts of intolerance—the banishment of Anaxagoras, the execution of Socrates, and the indictment of Aristotle for impiety. In all these cases, however, there is no doubt that the underlying causes of hostility were not religious but political. No state religion of Greece appears to have been sensible of real hurt from the progress of philosophy, and no philosopher, not even a Stoic or Epicurean, seems to have experienced any difficulty in conforming to the outward observances of Greek religion.

At first sight Greek religion and philosophy seem to stand so far apart that it is difficult to understand a

single individual being a whole-hearted disciple of both at once. Yet "the first Neo-Platonist" was a high-priest of Delphi, and the fact meant much to him. He carried out his priestly functions with reverence and regularity. But the age of the supreme importance of the Delphic Apollo was past. His position was very modest, like the fortunes of his people. Greek religion had for many years become entangled with Oriental beliefs, and in its way it was as receptive of foreign elements as was the religion of Rome. By the end of the Republic there was hardly an Eastern creed which had not its altar at Rome or its follower in Greece. The last years of Nero, according to the evidence of many authorities,¹ saw the trouble come to a head.

Plutarch, in his essay *De superstitione*, combated atheism and superstition, two trends of thought which seemed to him to have most pernicious influence. He himself had no sympathy with either the vague or the hysterical. He was always preoccupied in a practical way with the times in which he lived and with the people whom he had to address. He thought he found the necessary basis for a sane belief in the old historical traditions of religion. "The faith of our fathers is our inheritance. Its antiquity is proof of its divinity, and it is our duty to hand it down unsullied and unharmed to our posterity."² Just as to Tacitus³ Vespasian's inauguration of the new Capitol held promise of some kind of stability in Roman religion, so to Plutarch the temple of Delphi and all the rites and beliefs associated with it formed the redeeming hope in the contemporary

¹ e.g. Suetonius, *Nero*, ch. 56 (Dea Syria), and Juvenal, iii. 511 seq. (gods of Egypt).

² *De amore*, 13-14.

³ Hist. iv. 53.

religious chaos. It was possible, he thought, for all men to find sanity and safety at that altar. "For, indeed, our good Apollo seems to cure and solve all such difficulties as occur in the ordinary management of our life, by giving his oracles to those who resort to him." Nor is this all. "As for those problems which concern Reason, he leaves and propounds them to that part of the soul which is naturally addicted to philosophy, creating in it a desire leading to truth."¹ It has been shown how, in this same essay,² taking as a starting-point the inscription on the temple at Delphi, Plutarch works his way as far as he can, to the highest truths of philosophy. He realises that it is not given to everyone to scale such heights, and that the way lies through the door of advancing age and education. It is an important treatise, and repays study from this point of view.

Philosophy cannot come to a man all at once. Plutarch understood that other studies, carefully planned, must precede it, and that even then the young student may experience grave shocks when he is first introduced to it. The "daily tattle of mothers and nurses" is not the best introduction to philosophy. "So it happens that when such youths first hear from philosophers of things altogether different, they are surprised, bewildered, thunderstruck, and afraid to entertain or endure the new ideas until they have become accustomed to them, as they might to sunlight after being in the dark."³ Plutarch recommends that during their early years, while they are presumably living without question by the rites and beliefs of the state religion, they should be gently initiated into the first truths of philosophy as found in classical literature.

¹ De E, ch. 1.² Ch. 9.³ De aud. poet., ch. 14.

His position was different from ours. The old Greek literary masterpieces, Homer and the rest, did not correspond in standing or in function to our Bible. They were certainly considered to contain evidence as to the moral conduct of the gods ; but so completely were the domestic vagaries of Olympus divorced from the practical ethics, theology, or religious experience of the ordinary Greek that any moral defects lurking in this literature had only a negligible influence on its readers. We, however, sometimes try to build a philosophy of religion on an interpretation of the Bible that is apt to be only literal. We begin with the smallest children, by telling them the main events of the Old Testament, in the guise of an historical, though here and there a somewhat miraculous, narrative. It can be made very dramatic and very reverent ; nearly always it can be made sufficiently moral, and certainly no early teaching is capable of being more impressive, or is more likely to be remembered with faith and tenderness afterwards. But the problem of selection must arise. The difficulties lie not only in classical episodes such as the sacrifice of Isaac, the deception of Jacob, and Jephthah's vow, but, in a greater or less degree, on nearly every page. The ethical facts of ancient Hebrew history illustrate in a remarkable way the trend of progressive morality—first, the freshness and impulsiveness of early Israel ; next, the hard era of the Law ; then the submission and pessimism of the Wisdom literature ; and then the age of the Prophets, with their feeling for moral responsibility and for the worth of the individual. In fact, to use the Old Testament as a basis for moral or religious education is a task as delicate as it is complicated.

The New Testament, which is usually taken later,

presents still greater difficulties. It is enormously hard to pick it to pieces and say, "This is untrue," or "This is doubtful," or "This is barely probable." Many of us shirk such a course. Yet no one rues our neglect more than the student who is confronted later with the most penetrating suggestions of science and philosophy. A part, at least, of his cherished structure has to fall. Sometimes the whole fabric is destroyed at once. Even if later years build it up again, once the shadow of doubt has passed over it, it can never have the same serene outlook as before. We ought to prepare the minds of our youth for the problems of philosophy which may at any moment of their lives give them shocks which they are better spared. This is perfectly compatible with a sane and reverent religious teaching.

It was Kant who first formulated the three great questions which every man ought to ask himself. The first is, "What can I know?" and the answer lies in metaphysics. The second is, "What ought I to do?" and the answer lies in ethics. The third is, "What may I hope?" and the answer lies in religion. The modern teacher deals with the third question in the Scripture lesson. The second he attaches somewhat loosely to the fringe of the Scripture lesson, and otherwise relegates it to a perfectly haphazard moral training. The first he ignores.

Plutarch united the first and third, and although he was not embarrassed by modern scientific data when he announced with calm conviction that theology is the aim of philosophy, he grasped a truth which we should do well to strive after, not in spite of, but with all the help of, science.

The position of moral teaching in the curriculum has already been considered. It was seen that the

present generation has no very definite views on the subject. Most of such teaching comes, not from the schoolroom, but from the pulpit, where men's other needs are apt to be forgotten. What the pulpit preaches, the pews are prone to accept as the truth.

Plutarch, however, lived in an age when ethics was an important subject of thought and discussion. In the absence of the pulpit, the lecture-room and the dinner-table were the chief centres of this teaching. We have seen how deeply Plutarch was interested in minor morals—in little sins such as talkativeness, inquisitiveness, and shyness. He deals equally lightly with envy, hatred, and avarice, and rather more seriously with anger. But he has hardly a word on truthfulness, one of the first moral lessons which an impartial alien would think of importing into Greece. Little, too, is said of Plato's great virtues of bravery and justice. All this teaching, as it now stands, is detached from theological doctrine. It is plain and practical. It lives in the street and the market-place, and does not lift its eyes to the hill-tops. Yet it is possible to believe that, since the mainstay of all these practical virtues was *σωφροσύνη*, or self-control, and since the serenity born of self-control was the condition of intellectual activity in the highest sense, Plutarch had in his own mind an ultimate motive for this petty moral improvement, a motive which was probably lost on the ordinary citizen. To Plutarch, following Plato, the intellectual transcended the moral. The goal of religion, of philosophy, of everyday life was not the attainment of moral perfection. Morality was little more than a necessary stepping-stone, which, once past, became negligible. But although Plutarch was a philosopher, and had his hours of exaltation in which he could

understand this, he was also sufficiently a man to appreciate the position of those whose intellectual efforts were weak or desultory or non-existent. Moral teaching was intended to introduce something higher ; but if personal deficiencies of the individual precluded this, it still might, in fact must, serve as a necessary basis for the ordinary amenities of civilised society.

It is unfair to say of Plutarch : " He professed himself a cosmopolitan thinker. He was really a narrow and bigoted Hellene." ¹ Really his outlook was very sane. " No lark without its crest." He took the quotation from Simonides,² and could see that no man is without his peculiar faults and foibles. Yet his dreams were those of an idealist. " He had a philosophic mind, but a religious soul." ³

The content of modern morality has widened and deepened in the course of time, but the moral moods and impulses of the average modern man have not changed beyond recognition of affinity with those of his predecessors of the Greek age. We, too, are idealists—that at least is our profession. Where are morals, petty or other, in our scheme for the improvement of the young ? We create a special atmosphere, a school code of what is right and wrong ; the force of this would be difficult to over-estimate. Then we attach our moral standards to the Church Catechism and the Sermon on the Mount, and in the latter case especially we fall dismally short just where we ought to reach so far. But it is not enough to teach the young what they ought to do. We must teach them why they ought to do it. Some day they will raise

¹ Mahaffy, *Greek World under Roman Sway*, ch. 13.

² De util. cap., ch. 10.

³ Gréard, ch. 2, § 3.

the question if we do not. We cannot instil into a child the Platonic estimate of intellect. But he ought by degrees to be allowed to gain some idea of what is the most important, the most probably immortal part of himself, why it must be cared for, and why the other parts of his personality must be cared for too, by virtue of their relation with this. He must understand how little we know, and—more important—how much we hope to know hereafter. If he has no sense of our doubts, he cannot properly appreciate our hopes; and our hopes are the greatest gift that we can give him.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SERENE PHILOSOPHER

WE have already observed from time to time the note of quietude which dominates Plutarch's teaching. The system of education which he has in mind, like the course of life for which it is to be a preparation, is to be pursued by all concerned with the utmost serenity, and agitations and disturbances, both from the individual soul and from external circumstances, are to be eliminated as far as possible. This is not surprising in view of the character of the age in which he lived. Generally speaking, wars, as far as they took place, were waged on the farthest borders of the Empire, and the territories in its centre were comparatively untouched by them. Of political upheaval, even at Rome, there was nothing of any importance in Plutarch's lifetime after 69 A.D., and many provinces, such as Greece, enjoyed for many years a condition of undisturbed political calm. It is true that at some times and in some places this calm amounted practically to stagnation; the danger was inevitable. Be it true or not of Greece, however, there is no doubt that in this matter Plutarch was completely in harmony with his generation, and that his teaching was designed to perpetuate an atmosphere which by its very nature afforded perfect satisfaction to everyone living in it.

The habit of a serene outlook upon the world was to be taught in early years. It is suggested in the

Præcepta coniugalia and inculcated by many domestic hints and anecdotes in the *De ira cohibenda*. It is easy, too, to see from the *Consolatio ad uxorem* that Plutarch and Timoxena were of one mind in trying to promote domestic peace, and to prevent outbursts of grief or anger where a little quiet thought would maintain the serene mood of the household against petty *contretemps* or great disaster.

The same atmosphere was to exist in the classroom. The *De recta ratione audiendi* clearly had this object in view. Here Plutarch enjoins respectful silence among the youthful listeners (τῷ νέῳ κόσμος ἀσφαλῆς ἐστὶν ἡ σιωπή),¹ and expresses disapproval of the turbulent soul which is swayed by emotions of anger, envy, ambition, or unbalanced admiration of the lecturer—in a word, which *θορυβεῖ καὶ περισπᾷ τὴν διάνοιαν*. Not only the specific teaching of the school, but also its general atmosphere, was to contribute something to the personality of the serene philosopher who was to be its product.

The essay *De tranquillitate animi* has already been analysed, and shown to be one of the finest of Plutarch's writings. The chief lesson elucidated from our previous examination of it was the importance of the control of the *πάθη*. This is, of course, the key to any effective and consistent quietude of life. We now revert to this essay, and gather up the most important points which bear on the wider issues of the present chapter.

In the first place he remarks with much shrewdness that serenity is not a synonym for idleness (*ἀπραξία*).² We cannot acquire peace of mind by sitting still and doing nothing. Laertes left his home and kingdom,

¹ 39 B.

² 465 C.

and retired to a secluded life where he was free from all his previous labours and responsibilities, but his grief was still his constant companion. Achilles, too, abandoned his share in the war against Troy, retired to his ships, and idled away his time in a passion of resentment (*ἐρώσιον ἄχθος ἀρούρης*); but the solitude and calm of his unfilled days only increased the bitterness of his sorrow.

This is a great lesson, and a most important corollary to what Plutarch is about to teach. The general moral of the essay might easily be misconstrued, were it not for this preliminary warning. While the lives of the younger generation should be freed from disturbing influence, whether of external events or of undue emotionalism within, they should nevertheless be filled with interest and occupation. This idea makes Plutarch's principles of value down to the present day.

Next, speaking out of the wisdom of his Stoicism, he stresses the paramount truth that the secret of peace of mind lies within ourselves. This was a comparatively easy doctrine to enunciate in his day, when outward circumstances were as a rule so tranquil that they could seldom be held to blame for any serious disturbance of man's equanimity. *ἡ πηγή τῆς εὐθυμίας ἐν αὐτοῖς*¹ is one of the chief texts of Plutarch's teaching. The fact that in these days it is harder to discern its truth does not detract from the necessity of our understanding and adopting it. While so much of our education is directed to preparing the young to deal with the vast machinery of the external world, so intricate, absorbing, and apt to overwhelm, its final issue should lie above and beyond this, in the soul of

¹ 467 A.

man himself, independent of passing circumstance, unassailable by its fears or regrets.

Probably Plutarch's concentration on the education of the mind is largely responsible for the fact that he nowhere talks about, or seems interested in, the influence of environment on education. The question did not greatly trouble educators until long after his time. Those who were educated were well to do, and pleasant surroundings were so inevitable a part of their lives that no one considered what might be the result if these were lacking. The most beautiful works of a remarkably artistic nation of workers in marble and in colour fell naturally and profusely into place in the school as much as in the home, and their influence, although little considered or discussed, was undoubtedly powerful. Slums in Greece were very few, if existent, and their inhabitants lived so much out of doors and found their interests in every part of the city besides their own, that the sordidness of their particular house or street counted for little compared with all that its counterpart connotes in our own day. In any case, the inhabitant of a Greek slum was outside the pale of the aristocracy of learning, so that the influence of his environment on his education could not trouble anyone. It was unnecessary to urge that for indoor schooling a child should be housed in an airy and pleasant building, the walls adorned with beautiful pictures for the sub-conscious training of his æsthetic taste. As for outdoor training, the artistic aptitude of his countrymen and the hand of Nature profited him more generously than do all the official regulations which provide for the children of our own time and country.

Present conditions make this lesson of Plutarch

difficult to apply in the primitive simplicity with which he taught it ; in fact, they quite preclude the possibility of our making it an elementary truth on which to begin our educational process. But two things are important to remember. In the first place, the fact that Plutarch did not penetrate so deeply into the complexities of this matter was the natural result of the age he lived in. Secondly, although out of common humanity we have to wrestle heavily with circumstance and environment before we introduce to our children this doctrine of self-found peace and happiness, the great necessity of its introduction and emphasis is as pressing to-day as it has ever been, and the way in which Plutarch has worked it out and commended it to us is one of the most valuable lessons he has left us.

The next point involves greater difficulties. After deprecating the pursuit of vain ambition and undue concern and worry over worldly affairs, he adds : "The man who accustoms himself to be borne along gently and easily by the current of life is the most amenable and pleasant companion to his fellows." This is true ; but that it should be set forth as a working ideal may well surprise us. Nations vary in the degree to which they are naturally apt to swim with the tide. Times vary in the extent to which such a policy is desirable. To the Greeks of the first and second centuries A.D. there seemed hardly any other course open. The *Pax Romana* was a moral force as much as a political principle. Many parts of the Empire stagnated during this era, and needed to be stirred. That, at least, is the judgment which is most easily passed by us upon the conditions of that age. But we are inclined to live at the opposite extreme. We are all for striving. We are obsessed with a desire for change—for change in

political or economic institutions, in social and personal relationships, in education, even in the daily routine of our lives. Whatever were the features and qualities of the old order, we are ruthlessly intent on sweeping it aside and setting up one new and different. We swim against the tide on principle. We profess to be creating a new world, and we lay its foundations in excitement and unrest. We have no desire to be "a most amenable and pleasant companion" to our fellows; and so the new world arises in an atmosphere of discourtesy and selfishness. In fact, we are anxious to supersede anyone's meditations on the tranquillity of the soul with a doctrine of excitement and revolution of our own. It is discussed without hesitation or restraint in our homes. The children regard it as the natural atmosphere of their lives. They go to school and find that those who teach them desire to introduce changes, not because the changes are necessarily good, but because they are supposed to be suggestive of progress. "Self-government" is thrust upon the children, who are invited to initiate change and upheaval in a little world of their own creation. The fruit of all this in later days is hardly a matter for surprise.

When we look back over the course of history, we can see that this is but a phase, superficial and fleeting. The moral and historic continuity of the race has never yet been impaired by a break, and probably never will be. The cry for a New World is as old as the world itself. Periodically it recurs, and in the intervening periods it dies away and is forgotten. It sounded like a trumpet over Greece in the days of Alexander, and before many years had passed Greece realised that in this new world she had grasped at an illusion. It was heard again in Rome in the age of the Gracchi and

of Julius Cæsar, but its only fruit lay in men's growing realisation of the fact that it is a greater and more enduring work to heal the wounds of the Old World than to rock the cradle of the New.

Plutarch's essay was written in this period of calm ensuing on a storm. He was not absorbed in looking forward ; he could find peace in the memory of good things past. "Wise men, by the exercise of vivid memory, can make the past into the present for themselves."¹ Plutarch's view of the future we may regard with some envy as the obvious outcome of an age of peace : "We see that it is but a small part of man which rots and perishes and is subject to fortune ; we ourselves have control over the better part, in which reside the greatest blessings—noble thoughts, and learning, and reason, culminating in virtue, all immovable and indestructible in their very essence. Well may we be bold and unafraid towards the future, and may address Fortune in the words with which Socrates addressed his jury, though speaking officially to Anytus and Meletus : 'Anytus and Meletus can cause my death, but they cannot do me harm.'"²

Rare and illuminating suggestion ! Rare, at least, to an age which is prone to think of education as a preparation for the struggle of life, rather than as material for a character of rich assurance and inalienable calm. Plutarch speaks further : "Neither a magnificent house, nor abundance of gold, nor pride of race, nor importance of office, nor charm of speech, nor eloquence of argument can bestow on life such serenity and calm as can a mind which is pure of evil works and counsels, and which maintains as the fountain of its life a character unsullied and unper-

¹ 473 C.

² 475 E.

turbed. This is the source of noble actions, which combine freshness and cheerfulness of impulse with greatness of idea, and make memory a sweeter and more abiding possession than Pindar's 'hope, which is the nurture of old age.' ”¹

We cannot expect to see eye to eye with Plutarch in this matter. The difference in character between his time and ours prevents it. His essay may at least open our eyes to his point of view. The phases of the world's history recur in cycles, and when our own storm and stress are past we may live again in an atmosphere like Plutarch's, and cherish peace just as now we cultivate strife. The serene philosopher will come again into his own. It will be all the better for him and for the world around him if the seeds of his serenity have been sown in his early years ; if he has received as a birthright what he passes on as his most priceless legacy to posterity ; if, in fact, his serenity is the expression, not of world-weariness, but, in the Platonic sense, of a philosophic ideal.

¹ 477 A-B.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

THE plan of collecting Plutarch's scattered ideas on education into anything so definite as a theory has perhaps been justified. (He was at heart a great educationist. He possessed that first essential for the part—an intense interest in and love of his fellow-men. He was, moreover, himself a practical teacher. His experience in the work was wide, having lain in both Greece and Rome. We may also assume that it was long, for it is beyond doubt that he lived to a good old age. In those days there was no Pensions Act to suggest decrepitude at seventy, and he would hardly of his own accord lay down the task which was so congenial to him and which brought him into such close relationship with other people.

There are extant no contemporary opinions of the way in which he performed his varied functions in life. Much as we should like to know what the professional bricklayers of Chæronea thought of his supervision, which was a source of such pride to him, we should like still more to hear the verdict, conscious or unconscious, of some of the pupils who sat before him in the lecture-room. So much is known, from outside witnesses, of Socrates and Plato, and even of less important personages, such as Gorgias and Protagoras. We can almost recreate the atmosphere of their classes, and picture the ring of disciples, each

with his own attitude of love, or friendly questioning, or high disdain towards the master ; and we know the tactics of the master in each case, how they were received, and perhaps what fruit they bore afterwards.

Of Plutarch's practical success in the classroom nothing is known except what is described in his own pages. From the essay *De recta ratione audiendi* we know something of the difficulties which he had to encounter in the ordinary behaviour of his class ; and from the story of Arulenus Rusticus, and other references to his teaching in Rome, we know a little of his personal success, at least among the maturer of his pupils. But, in the absence of further external evidence, we are chiefly thrown back upon his unconscious revelation of himself and our own impressions of his personality.

His greatness as an educator was not due immediately to his studies of earlier systems of thought, but to the habit of clear and constructive thinking which those studies engendered. His educational policy was none the less balanced and consistent for not being definitely formulated. It was the work of a man at once deeply versed in sound methods of thought and widely experienced as a practical teacher, and it is worth more to the world now than many of the unpractical fancies which have drifted upon us from the minds of vague dreamers, and tended to obscure our working vision from time to time.

The range of interests which he displays in his writings is enormous. The subjects of his oral teaching were as varied and as wide. No teacher of to-day would dream of trying to impart really advanced knowledge of literature, history, mathematics, natural science, and several branches of philosophy. Yet that is, in effect,

what Plutarch achieves. The fact argues, in the first place, intellectual power of no mean quality. If his achievement is rarer among us, because our knowledge of each of these branches of study is now much deeper and more intricate, nevertheless the versatility of his intellect is unchallenged, and his knowledge over a wide field was both full and accurate. He was not a pioneer of original research, but he followed the pioneers closely in many directions.

This breadth of interest was an old feature of Greek education. It was first imported into the Greek system by the sophists of the fifth century, and in the natural aptitude of the Greeks for wide rather than deep study it found a soil where it was certain to flourish vigorously. It was an attitude not without grave dangers. It tended to make learning superficial. The average Greek intellect was quick, fond of subtleties and striking details, but often heedless of general effects and blind to logical conclusions. Too often it aimed only at the glamour of the moment. It played for effect. It sought to surprise, to bewilder, to dazzle. It was not scholarly, nor single-minded in its pursuit of truth. It is a pity that a great number of eminent Greeks—Plutarch among them—who combined versatility of intellect with a sound scholarly instinct, had to teach pupils of inferior calibre. They became unwilling and often unwitting crammers. Plutarch at least realised his position. He tries more than once to instil into his disciples a proper humility of purpose and thoroughness of research.

Even so, he does not attempt in any sense to train specialists. The expert in early Greek literature had to be an expert also in all the chief philosophic systems and in all the current information about mathematics

and science. How far this was good may be a matter of doubt. The wider a man's interests, the better it is for those with whom he comes in contact. He is likely to be a more sympathetic, entertaining, and amiable person than his neighbour of narrower outlook. On the other hand, the limitation of his intellectual powers naturally prevents him from going deeply into any one of his numerous subjects. He is concerned only with the superficial and with what is already known. The unknown has no charm for him ; he feels no call to adventure into the regions of the unexplored. He is likely to be deficient in originality and in spontaneity of research. It can be said truly of every subject that the more one knows, the more one realises how much remains to be known. A great defect of Plutarch's age was its lack of enterprise, and its tame and unqualified acceptance of facts handed down to it by previous generations of scholars. It made no effort to enhance the value of these facts by further investigation for the benefit of those who would come after. This feature of the early Empire was not confined to scholarship. It was part of the general attitude of the men of the time—a feeling of indifference towards life, and a disinclination to make efforts for the improvement of the present or the future. Although specialisation is not without its dangers, a few specialists in that age, had they existed, might have perceived the real need and possible direction for some advance.

In one way the education of the age was specialised—it confined itself to pure scholarship. No subject of a commercial or utilitarian nature was introduced within its bounds. Trades worked out their own science and handed it down through successive genera-

tions of their own guilds. Even the engineer was a creature apart from the professor and had no recognised share in the humanities, while in domestic life wives and daughters and household slaves pursued their allotted professions in guilds as strong as they were unofficial. When the world was thus divided into two parts, the educated and the uneducated, the losses on each side were mutual. The scholar lacked the practical outlook which would have stimulated his scholarship, and the manual worker lacked the reasoned basis and the long view which would have added to his work such untold strength. Communism of knowledge is one of the few forms of communism to which no objection can be raised. Plutarch was not without faint stirrings of aspirations after this ideal. He viewed educated women with admiration, mingled, it is true, with a certain amount of distrust. Yet Timoxena, whose intelligence is proved in several passages of the *Consolatio ad uxorem*, cannot have lived with him all those years without acquiring at least a superficial polish of learning in many directions. Even his slaves must have absorbed a good deal of information, usually beyond the understanding of such intellects, through daily contact with their master. But this was probably due more to Plutarch's inability to restrain the exuberance of his learning, than to any conscious desire to educate the populace at large. In the main he accepted without question the exclusiveness of learning which was characteristic of his day.

His sphere of influence was thus limited, but the limitation being once recognised the influence was considerable. The individualistic tendencies of contemporary teaching were responsible for much. We are apt to blame Plutarch for being conceited. Cer-

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tainly he was well aware of his own value, and frank in his expressions of self-esteem. It is, however, probable that other people, especially his pupils, were equally warm and outspoken in their admiration of him. In those days the personality of the teacher counted for a great deal more than did the corporate character of the school or university. Plutarch himself, in his moments of retrospect, looked back with loyal affection, not to Athens as his university, but to Ammonius as his teacher.¹ The indefinable atmosphere, which we feel hangs about an old institution, the atmosphere which collects all the memories and dreams of past generations of students and offers growing enchantment to every newcomer—this seemed to lie outside the experience of the ancients. It was the personality of the teacher that mattered, and when the personality was as strong and benevolent as Plutarch's, the institution was rich in spite of the deficiency on the other side—a deficiency which is largely the creation of our modern point of view.

Plutarch reveals himself in his own pages. He must have been a wonderful talker, for many of the most charming parts of what he wrote are clearly talk committed to paper. His store of information was immense. He was never at a loss for an illustrative quotation or anecdote. He was generally shrewd and clear-sighted, both with people and with things. He had a quick eye for the humorous, and was not infrequently a little whimsical. Through all his teaching there shone a great singleness of purpose, and reverence for the truth in things both great and small. He never regarded his

¹ For a note on an earlier Athenian teacher, Theomnestus the Academic, see Plutarch, *Brutus*, ch. 24. Horace, however, mentions no individual teachers in his recollections of the university (Ep. II. ii. 43).

teaching lightly. Whatever his subject, whether it was the Platonic conception of immortality or some mere question of manners, he always meant what he said and spoke out of the fulness of careful thinking. His own courteous bearing must have been quite charming and beyond reproach ; and, in his insistent teaching of courtesy and consideration for others, he recognised a need which the present age is too apt to forget. Yet, after all, the personal vitality of the man can never be reproduced, or analysed into a helpful formula. We cannot make such teachers, we can only hope that they may exist.)

Such a character repays study, and it cannot fail to be remembered with admiration, even by a world nearly two thousand years older than his own. To those who knew him, such an admiration must have served as a close bond of fellowship, even where it was nothing to them to feel that they were all members of a particular class or body. This personal bond was the only corporate feeling that he imparted to them.

He upheld the duty of man in the municipality, and taught loyalty to the central authority at Rome. He even had a passing good word to say of Nero. There is no emotional sentiment attached to any of this teaching. His class never looked for a panegyric on the Emperor's birthday, and although it was accustomed to occasional reminders of the past glories of Greece (as in the treatise *De gloria Atheniensium*), it received them in an antiquarian rather than in what we should call a patriotic spirit. Patriotism was at that time a mood of quiet acceptance rather than a passion of partisanship. The conditions of the times enabled, or perhaps compelled, Plutarch to avoid one of the most difficult subjects in education. The teaching

of national feeling at the present day brings a host of complications in its train, yet never before has the world been so conscious of the necessity of promoting active corporate life by every available means. When our whole known world consists of a league of states in close harmony with one another, as the Roman world was constituted eighteen hundred years ago, there may arise another generation of teachers as fortunate as Plutarch. In the meantime the National Anthem, even in the unconcealed crudity of its latter verses, may well retain its place in the curriculum. Nor are school and college songs to be forgotten. Logically there is little justification for them; that is why people who do not know their spell despise and ridicule them. Yet the spell is there for all who have sung them in the right place and season. There is nothing so powerful for abiding fellowship among men. Plutarch might write an erudite treatise on music, but if he never sang his *Gaudeamus* his life was so much the poorer than ours.

Plutarch, according to his lights, taught his pupils their position and duties in ordinary life. This lesson he effected as much by example as by precept. He was a practical man of affairs, with a keen interest in his municipal as well as in his professorial duties. One readily accepts the impression he gives that he was one of the pillars of Chæronea, and the essays which we have examined on statesmanship and public service show that he was fully alive to the theory as well as the practice of this side of life. He had, moreover, travelled extensively, and there was no type of human-kind that did not promptly win his sympathy and interest. He was far from being unduly absorbed by his professorial calling. He was never a mere school-

master and nothing more. He took his place, naturally and fearlessly, in a larger world than the academic; and the pupils of such a master would expect to take a similar place for their own. They would escape the dangers which beset the disciple of the mere scholastic; they would not become limited scholastics themselves, nor would they in after life be carried away by a passionate revolt against all things academic, under the delusion that these things must of necessity be narrow, dull, and jejune.

It is perhaps as an exponent of the past rather than as a guide to the present—certainly rather than as a prophet of the future—that Plutarch leaves his most valuable lessons to the modern teacher. We live now at a time when the position of the ancient classics in our education is extremely critical. We say with great assurance that they can never die, but we have reason to wonder with some anxiety in what form they will continue to live. By the Greek “classics” we mean usually the pre-Hellenistic authors. It is thus not without interest that we observe how Plutarch dealt with these earlier writers, for in some ways of thought and feeling his age was as far removed from theirs as is our own.

In the first place—and it is by far the most important place—Plutarch was a Platonist. Platonism will never die, and it is impossible to imagine a generation of men whom it will not enrich. In the evolution of a philosophy there are two forces always at work; there is the mechanical play of circumstance—the external character of a particular age—and there is the inexplicable force of a particular personality. Most great philosophers have been, to a curious degree, the single-hearted servants of philosophy; yet probably none—not even

Aristotle, with his absorbing intellectuality—has been untouched by the life around him. Plato was pre-eminently a witness to the invisible and the non-experienced ; yet he was wide awake to the vitality and beauty of the visible world, which, it may be remarked, was particularly worth looking at in Greece, especially at Athens, in his time. It was an age of observing, wondering, seeking. No possible impression of man or of nature was lost, and the philosopher, who was also at heart a poet and a painter, gathered into his mind a rich store of images which make his writings unforgettable because so human. Plato was ἡττων τῶν καλῶν—subject to the influence of beautiful persons and things ; and yet there was in him a strain of asceticism, unusual in the Greek. For him, all gifts of sense and intelligence converged in one supreme faculty—θεωρία, vision. The sensuous lover of the beautiful became the lover of invisible beauty. Man was a compound of the mortal and immortal ; the mortal part was his body, and the immortal part Reason, composed of the same elements as the soul of the Universe. He was an οὐράνιον φυτὸν, οὐκ ἔγγειον, as St. Paul said long afterwards at Athens. The doctrine of the essential divinity of man is more fundamental than anything else in Platonism. Implicit in it is the Platonic theory of knowledge—that the only true objects of knowledge are the invisible and eternal Ideas. It also presupposes his belief in pre-existence and immortality. Lastly, it is the rock on which his whole educational theory is built, for he held that the soul can take nothing with it into the unseen world except its education.

Plutarch hardly concerned himself with the doctrine of Ideas, at any rate in detail. Otherwise he adopted all these Platonic theories. It was the spirit of his age

to accept, just as it was the spirit of Plato's to inquire and research. It was the least vital phase that Platonism could go through, for the essence of Platonism is the pursuit of fresh truth, and thus it is true to say that the mantle of Plato fell more on Plotinus, who tried to go beyond him, than on Plutarch, who was content to go no further. Even so, we have seen what a power Platonism was to Plutarch. It is not in the *Quæstiones Platonicae* nor in the *De animæ procreatione*, abstruse and scholarly as these are, that the power is best seen. Some of his best religious and theological treatises would never have been written apart from it, and it is the foundation of his views on education. Few teachers who become acquainted with Platonism let their teaching remain uncoloured by it. Its love of beauty, its unswerving quest of truth at any cost, its faith in man's divinity, together with its profound love of his humanity; its belief that not a jot of educational experience is ever wasted, but is gathered up and glorified in man's immortality—we have seen all these things alive and forceful in Plutarch's mind as he worked. Plutarch, late though he was, and lengthy and unoriginal, lays his chief claim to importance in the fact that he reveals what Platonism could do even in an unpromising age, and he proves that whatever may happen to the rest of the classics, Platonism at least in some guise will be with us as long as there are teachers to teach and pupils to be taught.

Plutarch's interest in the ancient classics did not confine itself to Plato. He quotes from Homer frequently. It is clear that he knew the text very well indeed, and that he had devoted much thought to both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, finding in nearly every episode some material for moralising after the dreary manner

of his age. He treated the old Athenian dramatists in almost the same way, though he was not so fond of them as he was of Homer; his feelings towards Aristophanes were twofold. We owe him a considerable debt for the amount of text which he has preserved for us in his quotations from these writers, and which has reached us through no other channel. Of his love for these authors, and of the inspiration and delight with which they filled his life, there can be no doubt. It matters little that his understanding of them was not the same as ours. No two people have ever interpreted, say, Sophocles in exactly the same way. The interpretation is bound to be coloured by the personality of the interpreter. We talk about the Greek "spirit." We try to explain it to the "man in the street"—to popularise Greek. We do not realise that we are attempting the impossible. Whatever this "spirit" is, for all its beauty and vitality, and irresistible charm, it remains always a little distant, a little austere. It cannot be popularised or cheapened. It cannot be brought down to the man in the street; he must rise to it, or he will not find it at all. This lack of adaptability in it does not detract from its value or make it less worth finding. We need the existence of an intellectual Olympus in these days when politically we are all men of the plain. When scholars attempt to popularise the Greek "spirit" they render but a sorry travesty of the original. What they present is rather an impression of their own personality; of the value of that, this is not the place to judge. On the same principle, we meet Plutarch's attitude towards the earlier Greek writers with sympathy, not with the severe condemnation which issues from self-flattery or superficial thought.

There are two principles which form an under-current to all Plutarch's teaching, and which cannot be overlooked in a final review of his work. These are the two phrases which were inscribed on the famous temple of which he was priest. The first, *μηδὲν ἄγαν*, "moderation in all things," is, from one point of view, the one vitiating factor in his work; yet he is hardly to be blamed for this. The rule was first formulated into this immortal phrase by the Greeks of a very different era, when the spirit of adventure and a restless impulse to question all the mysteries of a young and unexplored world were fresh and unbounded in their beginnings, and were apt to lead men to ask questions without waiting for answers, or to catalogue answers without weighing their full significance. There easily arose a tendency to rush to extremes. "Solon, Solon," said the priest of Egypt to the philosopher, "ye Greeks are ever children,"¹ and to the early Greek, the young Greek, the warning of *μηδὲν ἄγαν* was necessary. To the middle-aged Greek under the Roman Empire it was superfluous. Greek thought in that age needed an impetus, not a restraint. Plutarch did not realise this. It is very difficult to detach oneself from one's own age, and to judge it from a standpoint of an external and impartial observer. Ages come in cycles—first the rapid, then the slow, then the rapid again. We are living now in one of the rapid ages, and there never was a more crying need of the principle of *μηδὲν ἄγαν*. We need it far more than Plutarch did, and there is no reason why we should despise it simply because he gave it a rather inopportune emphasis. It is a principle that never comes amiss in a teacher of the young.

¹ Plato, *Timæus*, 22 B.

The second principle is "Know thyself"—*γνῶθι σεαυτόν*. This is more easily said than done, and even were it fully achieved it is not a complete foundation for life. Succeeding generations have added to it, "Know thy brother," and yet we have not reached the millennium. "Know thyself" was the first commandment as soon as man became aware of the mystery of his own personality, and that mystery still remains. The fact does not invalidate the necessity of the search. It enforces hard and clear thinking, without which any intellectual effort is valueless. It necessitates a certain amount of courage—not merely the reckless courage of the hardy adventurer, but a coolness born of a staunch faith in the universe, which will not fail in the face of discoveries however bewildering or seemingly disastrous. There is little enough that we can really "know," but no accumulation of facts in our minds is of any use if we have no notion within ourselves about our own nature and place in the universe. Plutarch's use of introspection among his pupils was guarded. It has its dangers always, and its profit varies with particular people. Even with pupils such as he taught—those of the student age—it must be handled circumspectly. It is liable at any moment to lead to an excessive cult of individualism. Plutarch carried this doctrine further than Socrates or Plato carried it, although both these laid great stress on the importance of questioning everything, even one's own soul. Plato was not at heart an individualist; that is what makes his educational theory more interesting than inspiring. In personal immortality, for example, he took little interest, as is shown by a close examination of the *Phædo*. What really interests him in that essay is the immortality which is realised at every

moment by one who rises in thought to the Eternal. His goal is the finding of what is *αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό*. His tools are abstractions, and the actual existence of these abstractions is one of his fundamental tenets. We owe it to Plutarch that he imparted a personal value to Platonism ; and although we are now going further, and learning to value personality in the aggregate, the human and personal element in Plutarch's teaching is of more immediate value to us than is much of what we draw from his predecessors.

Plutarch has never ranked as one of the world's great educators whose theory should be studied as a possible working basis by every young teacher. His popularity has fluctuated. There have been times when he was almost forgotten. At other times he has been deeply loved by great men. Montaigne called him his "breviary." Rousseau owed him much. Emerson, regarding one of his periods of eclipse with considerable regret, said, "Plutarch will be perpetually re-discovered as long as books last." At the present time he seems to be just emerging from obscurity. It is significant that his reappearance coincides with a period in which so many educational problems are prominent in our minds. He has much to teach us.

We cannot take Plutarch's thought and import it mechanically into our own educational system, for his world is different from ours. But none of his teaching need be lost. He is always suggestive, even where nowadays he is not practicable. He had a clear eye for the difficulties of his case, and a keen brain for their solution. Unembarrassed by political or academic restrictions, he was free to work out his problem in his own way. He was entirely unbiassed and uncontro-

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versial. He viewed life as a whole, and put education into its proper place. Voltaire said that philosophy consists of the things that everybody knows and of those which nobody ever will know. Plutarch understood this. As a philosopher, he gave his mind to both, and as a teacher he commended both to those who were to follow him. > χρῆ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥσπερ ἐπάδειν ἑαυτῷ.

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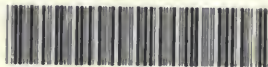
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